

**BIRMINGHAM'S PRE-SCHOOL CHILDCARE DURING
THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines pre-school childcare provision in Birmingham during the Second World War. As well as providing a local dimension to an understudied area of education, it adds to our understanding of the home front, women's history and the relationship between theory and practice in childcare provision at this time. It investigates childcare facilities available for working mothers by the outbreak of the hostilities and how these increased to meet wartime demand for work. An innovative project carried out by Canadian child psychologist, Dr William Blatz and his team at Birmingham's Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre was an important new childcare facility. The thesis analyses the impact of nursery school education on the experiences of children, staff, families and the local community by interrogating a range of primary sources, including Canadian records not previously utilised by historians, official records such as central and local government reports, Mass Observation reports, newspapers and other printed material. These primary sources are problematic as they were primarily produced by men in positions of authority, so they have been interpreted to uncover the perspectives and experiences of mothers, childcare practitioners and children. The thesis argues that Birmingham became an epicentre of progressive educational practice in childcare during the Second World War, which helped to shape national guidelines at the time and after the war.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the young children of Birmingham.

A chestnut tree was planted at the school by the children attending Greet Free Kindergarten the year that it opened in June 1904. It grew so big that it needed to be transplanted to Sparkhill Park in November 1916. These verses were written for the occasion.



Kindergarten chestnut tree replanting ceremony¹

¹ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association.

The Kindergarten Chestnut Tree

Twass just a little chestnut brown
Which we in damp earth placed,
And not a sign of life or growth
About it could be traced.

But soon a tiny bud appeared,
And others followed too,
Then leaves began to show themselves,
Which fast and faster grew.

And then the tree became so big
The tree-pot was too small,
So in the garden it was placed
Where it grew straight and tall.

And now November days are here
When evenings soon get dark;
We bring the tree, our chestnut tree,
To plant it in the park.

It first was planted in the year
When Greet School did begin;
And God has given it life and growth,
Our grateful thanks to win.

And may our tree as years go on
Grow handsome, large, and strong;
That birds may rest upon its boughs,
And fill the air with song.

And in the brilliant summer time
Its shade may welcome be,
And people all will much admire
The Kindergarten Tree.

M. E. LL.²

² LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association'. The unidentified author is thought to be a member of the Lloyd Family.

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It is impossible to recognise all of the repositories explored during the course of this study. However, I would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance provided by staff in the following: The National Archives; Archives and Collections, Library of Birmingham; The British Library; Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham; Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics; and The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Canada.

David Beattie's contribution by proofreading this thesis is gratefully acknowledged, and I am thankful to the board of *Midland History* and the University of Birmingham for their awards of research grants to aid this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARP	Air Raid Precautions Service
BDNCC	Birmingham Day Nursery Campaign Committee
BFI	British Film Institute
BLA	Birmingham Ladies Association
BMT (BMAG)	Birmingham Museums Trust: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
BMT (TSM)	Birmingham Museums Trust: Thinktank Science Museum
BMIHT	British Motor Industry Heritage Trust
BPKA BNSA	Birmingham People's Kindergarten Association, replaced by Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association
BVT	Bournville Village Trust: Heritage
CA&LS	Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Chester
CCR	Child Care Reserve
CRL	Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham
EWO	Emergency Works Order
GIS	Geographic Information System

IOE	Institute of Education
LEA	Local Education Authority
LOB	Library of Birmingham: Archives and Collections
LSE	London School of Economics: Library Archives
MO	Mass Observation
MRC	Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
NSA	Nursery School Association
NSDN NSCN	National Society of Day Nurseries, replaced by National Society of Children's Nurseries
TB	Tuberculosis
TBL	The British Library
TGFPK	The Greet Free People's Kindergarten
TI	Tube Investments
TNA	The National Archives
TTFRBL	The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto
WVS WRVS	Women's Voluntary Service 1938-1966 Women's Royal Voluntary Service 1966 onwards
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

PRE-SCHOOL CHILDCARE: A CHRONOLOGY

Nationally

- 1873** - First Local Authority Free Kindergarten established in Salford, Manchester
- 1906** – National Society of Day Nurseries founded
- 1911** – Margaret and Rachel McMillan established an open-air nursery for poor children in Deptford, London
- 1914** – Outbreak of First World War
- 1918** – Education Act offered LEAs option to accept responsibility for Nursery School provision from voluntary organisations
End of First World War
- 1923** – National Nursery School Association founded
- 1939** – Outbreak of Second World War
- 1940** – Treasury agreed to partially cover cost of wartime nurseries
- 1941** – Launch of National Registered Daily Guardian Scheme
Full financial responsibility for wartime nursery provision taken up by Government
Introduction of prefabricated hutments
Child Care Reserve launched
- 1944** – Education Act obliged local authorities to consider a long-term policy for Nursery Education
- 1945** - End of Second World War

Birmingham

- 1903** – Local Free Kindergarten movement established
- 1904** – First Free People's Kindergarten opened
- 1907** – Second Free People's Kindergarten opened
- 1908** – Birmingham People's Kindergarten Association established
- 1917** – Term 'Kindergarten' replaced by Nursery School
- 1919** – Birmingham Nursery School Association dissolved
LEA assumed responsibility for the 1907 Kindergarten
- 1924** – Open-air nursery class established in Dartmouth Street School
- 1926** – First regional branch of the Nursery School Association formed
- 1935** – Fellowship Nursery School opened by the local Nursery School Association
- 1940** – Pressure group Birmingham Day Nursery Campaign Committee formed
First seven wartime nurseries opened
- 1941** – Launch of the Birmingham Children's Home Service (childminding scheme)
- 1942** – First nursery hutments built
Dr William Blatz and first team arrive from Canada to establish project
Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre opened
Second of Blatz's teams arrives from Canada
- 1944** – In July, Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre ceased to be Canadian-managed
- 1945** – Birmingham LEA took over responsibility for fifteen of the wartime nurseries from the Public Health Department

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Historically, women have always played a large part in Birmingham's industrial workforce and during the Second World War the demand for female workers intensified. How local pre-school children were cared for provides additional perspectives on aspects of women's history and the history of education as well as local history. Birmingham's manufacturing importance was particularly significant at times of conflict and, during the war, as the local male workforce was reduced through conscription; replacements had to be found amongst the women of the city. Mothers with children under fourteen at home were not compelled to work; in reality, however, government officials and manufacturers relied upon them joining the workforce. Despite historical research into women's work, there are still many aspects of women's wartime history that deserve consideration, including how pre-school children were cared for while mothers juggled work and home.¹ Working mothers were essential for the local war effort, but without adequate childcare they were unable to work. Birmingham City Council created wartime pre-school childcare on a large scale, a subject which this thesis covers analytically, for the first time.

The implementation of Birmingham's pre-school childcare during the Second World War is explored through a variety of approaches. Research for this thesis carries the narrative beyond its Birmingham base, connecting with London and Canada. It

¹ Douie, V., *Daughters of Britain* (Oxford, 1949); Tilly, L. and Scott, J. W., *Women, Work, and Family* (London, 1989); Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012).

shows how the city became one of the epicentres of educational practice in childcare.

Local wartime ideas on provision often influenced national guidelines. When discussing wartime civil defence in his *History of the Corporation of Birmingham*,

Harold J Black claims:

Many of Whitehall's skeleton plans were either first clothed here or bettered in design and the city can thus claim to have made an invaluable contribution to the saving of life and property, not only within its own boundaries but also throughout the country.²

This not only applied to civil defence but also to Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare. The production of munitions depended upon the provision of this service.

This introduction firstly, identifies the key research questions and outlines the scope and purpose of the thesis. Secondly, it discusses the secondary literature and its relevance to this study. Thirdly, it outlines the methodological approach before discussing the sources examined, considering their strengths and limitations. Finally, the chapter summarises the approach in each of the individual chapters in the study.

Four key research questions are used to interrogate a wide range of primary source material. Firstly, why was there a need or demand for pre-school childcare in Birmingham during the Second World War? Secondly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision before the war, and what constraints affected its development? Thirdly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints

² Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), p. 1.

affected its development? Finally, to what extent and in what ways did Birmingham's pre-school childcare system secure the buildings and internal features and shape the educational experiences (Chapter 7) and staffing (Chapter 8) it needed to operate effectively?

The following chapters endeavour to answer these key questions through a series of sub-questions. Chapter 2 provides a case study of Birmingham's wartime industrial workforce from a women's perspective as it strives to address the first question. In an attempt to address the second question, Chapter 3 explores local pre-school childcare before 1939. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide case studies of the many strands of wartime pre-school childcare which includes the Canadian contribution to this provision, as it aims to address question three. Buildings, internal features and the staffing of nurseries is explored in Chapters 7 and 8 in an attempt to address the fourth question. Though this is a study of British pre-school childcare in a local context it includes an experiment which had significance beyond Birmingham.

In Birmingham mothers at work in wartime industries required pre-school childcare of one kind or another, either informally through social contacts or formally in provided institutions. Birmingham's leaders had a history of being educationally progressive, experimental and were open to support the development of pre-school childcare during the hostilities (see Chapters 3 and 4).³ This thesis explores what pre-school childcare was available in the city before the Second World War for working mothers

³ LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association', 'The Educational Porch of Life, Nursery Schools and their future' by Mrs Margaret Heitland, Reprinted from *The Queen*, (September 15, 1917); LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1, Box 30, File 10, Exhibition of Materials for use in Elementary Schools; Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

and investigates the administration of wartime pre-school childcare and the relationships between the various organisations responsible for this provision. It explores a project carried out by a team led by Canadian child psychologist, Dr William Blatz and explains why this expert was tempted to Birmingham during the hostilities. In so doing it considers the interaction between different cultures – educated middle-class Canadians and working-class Birmingham families. The material culture of nurseries is considered, through the buildings, what went into them and how childcare operated in practice. It also examines the recruitment, training and retention of Birmingham's wartime nursery workforce.

Literature review

Pre-school education has always had a low status in the educational hierarchy and histories of education have usually focused on primary provision upwards. The limited secondary literature which throws light on the history of the pre-school child has mainly focused on the ideas of the great educators or psychologists, with little consideration given to the historical development of provision for this age group.⁴ Other publications concentrate on organising and running a nursery.⁵ Even less has been written about the care of the pre-school children while their mothers worked during the Second World War. The following section evaluates the secondary sources which are divided into different areas of research. These focus upon the home front, the mobilisation of women and the provision of pre-school childcare,

⁴ Rusk, R. R., *A History of Infant Education* (London, 1933); Isaacs, S., *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years* (London, 1960).

⁵ McMillan, M., *The Nursery School* (London, 1919); Owen, G. (ed.), *Nursery School Education* (London, 1923).

Canadian psychologist Dr William Blatz, nursery buildings and finally the nursery workforce.

The home front

General publications and official histories explore the home front during the Second World War. A number of volumes from the *History of the Second World War* (United Kingdom Civil Series) were examined for this research.⁶ Of particular value were those written by Sheila Ferguson, Hilde Fitzgerald and Richard Titmuss, which provide administrative detail.⁷ The authors of this series were appointed as early as 1940 by their various ministries, giving them the advantage of being aware of some of the decision-making processes.⁸ Reference is sometimes made to a regional area or manufacturers but these volumes are not studies of manufacturing in specific towns or cities. They help us to understand the structures put in place to ensure that production problems experienced during the First World War were not replicated. One of the *History of the Second World War* series, *Studies in the Social Services*, provides an overview of social services nationally from an official perspective and includes chapters on childcare.⁹ It provides details of unpublished sources but some of these are identified in the bibliography as 'no trace' or 'destroyed', which creates a

⁶ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954); Scott, J. D. and Hughes, R., *History of the Second World War: The Administration of War Production* (London, 1955); Hornby, W., *History of the Second World War: Factories and Plant* (London, 1958); Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975); Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976).

⁷ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954); Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976).

⁸ Higham, R., 'The History of the Second World War: British Official Series', *Library Quarterly* (July, 1964), volume 34, issue 3, pp. 240-248.

⁹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954).

problem for this thesis.¹⁰ Those published prior to 1970 lack references to unpublished sources although copies of a parallel series intended for official use were referenced and occasionally find their way into public libraries or websites.¹¹ They are dominated by the view from London and censorship may be subtle in these volumes as the authors were aware that the sponsoring departments would be editing the work before publication. It is therefore difficult to know how much has been excluded or how much freedom the authors of this series were allowed. Interpretations offered by the individual authors of this official series can fall in and out of favour with historians. Revisionist historians for example have argued that Titmuss 'exaggerated the extent to which the artificial conditions of war provided a permanent basis for the creation of the welfare state in the postwar [sic] period, and the degree to which evacuation changed official attitudes to poverty'.¹² Although beyond the scope of this study, more examples of this can probably be found as new material emerges or approaches to historical analysis changes. Even so, this thesis has drawn upon this series to offer a national administrative context. There is little about human experiences, which this thesis aims to rectify.

A different perspective is offered in Arthur Mclvor's *A History of Work in Britain* which provides a critical analysis of relationships in the workplace. Although he does not deal with pre-school childcare, the tensions and conflicts, that he draws attention to have helped to shape some of the approaches that this thesis adopts.¹³ Angus Calder's comprehensive narrative presents the great events and leading figures but

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hyperwar [Online], <http://www.ibiblio.org> (Accessed: July 18, 2013).

¹² Welshman, J., 'Evacuation and Social Policy During the Second World War: Myth and Reality', *Twentieth Century British History* (1998), volume 9, issue 1, pp. 28-53.

¹³ Mclvor, A., *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (Basingstoke, 2001).

also the parts played by ordinary people. *The People's War* was a British history of the Second World War, revealing the diversity of regional cultures and experiences.¹⁴ Calder's 1969 study was probably restricted by the government archives being closed under a fifty-year rule. He exposed some of the less creditable features of behaviour on the home front for example the black market, industrial strife, and the persistence of the class divisions, but one book review for the *Sunday Times*, described this work as 'an essay in almost unadulterated nostalgia', not what Calder intended.¹⁵ However, later Calder 'too began to harbour serious doubts about the "Peoples War" thesis', expressed in his revisionist *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991). His evidence was substantially secured from individual experiences in the Mass Observation Collection, which had not been widely used by historians. These were spontaneously created individual accounts which were believed to be true by the people who were recorded, but as Calder admitted, they were not necessarily fully accurate.¹⁶ This substantial resource has been drawn upon for this thesis, given the perceptions and insights it contains for Birmingham.

Women and the Second World War

A number of studies explore women on the home front particularly studies by Denise Riley, Penny Summerfield and Sue Bruley have been examined.¹⁷ Riley's *War in the Nursery* briefly traces the policy-making of wartime nurseries from the Ministry of

¹⁴ Calder, A., *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (London, 1971).

¹⁵ Addison, P., 'Angus Calder (1942-2008)', *History Workshop Journal* issue 70, pp. 299-304.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Riley, D., *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London, 1983); Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984); Braybon, G. and Summerfield, P., *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London, 1987); Summerfield, P., *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998); Bruley, S., *Women in Britain since 1900* (Basingstoke, 1999); Bruley, S. (ed.), *Working for Victory: A Diary of Life in a Second World War Factory* (Stroud, 2010).

Health perspective 'as a setting of conflicting ideas about the socio-psychological impact of wartime collective care'.¹⁸ Summerfield duly recognises that Riley 'does not discuss in detail what she characterises as the "administrative, ideological dilemma of how the nurseries should be understood, as a "Welfare service", as an index of socio-educational policy, or as a limited reaction to the immediate necessities of war and the labour process'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Riley's work deals with psychological theories and approaches, which are valuable for this thesis.

Summerfield's childcare study focusses on the ideological practices of the Ministries of Health and Labour 'which developed in conflict as a result of their different reactions to the demands of production for the mobilisation of women from 1940-1943'.²⁰ In the Second World War the government had to make decisions about changing roles of women at work and at home, instigating public interference into the private sphere. Due to the war economy the state had to take steps to relieve women of domestic work to release them to enter into paid work, because of this the hostilities are often seen as a period of emancipation. In *Women Workers in the Second World War* Summerfield argues that 'in spite of challenge and expectation of change during the war, continuity with pre-war attitudes and practices towards women was considerable in the areas of both domestic work and paid employment'.²¹ Summerfield believes that claims such as the war being a period of emancipation assumes that the typical worker was a housewife with no previous record of paid employment.²² However, at the peak of female employment in 1943, a

¹⁸ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), p. 69.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²² Ibid.

survey found that seventy-one percent of those responding had been employed in industry at the outset of war; even those not employed in 1939, had often done paid work previously, usually prior to marriage.²³ This was a state of affairs substantiated in Birmingham. However, the author of this thesis does not believe most Birmingham working mothers were pre-occupied with emancipation but rather on how to safeguard their family's survival financially and practically. Quick and adequate provision of wartime pre-school childcare would make that task easier. This thesis looks at the dichotomy between the theory and practice of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare. Riley, by limiting her focus on developmental psychology and child psychologies to Europe and the USA, excludes an important contributor to this area of work; that of Canadian psychologist, William Blatz whose wartime contribution to Birmingham pre-school childcare, this thesis suggests influenced national nursery education during the hostilities and post-war. Blatz, is known for his creation of the security theory, a precursor to the attachment theory (see Chapter 5).²⁴ Unlike Summerfield's work, the purpose of this thesis is to neither concentrate on the theories or policies of wartime pre-school childcare but rather to focus on the reality of how it was established and operated in Birmingham.

Bruley's *Women in Britain since 1900* examines working-class women through the themes of work, education, family, sexuality, and organised political movements.²⁵ In an additional study, Bruley edited a joint diary kept by middle-class friends, Elsie Whiteman and Kathleen Church-Bliss. She succeeds in catching the frustrations and

²³ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁴ van Rosmalen, L., van der Horst, F. C. P. and van der Veer, R., 'From Secure Dependency to Attachment: Mary Ainsworth's Integration of Blatz's Security Theory Into Bowlby's Attachment Theory', *History of Psychology* (2016), volume 19, issue 1, pp. 22-39.

²⁵ Bruley, S., *Women in Britain since 1900* (Basingstoke, 1999).

the atmosphere of gloom often experienced by those carrying out war-work.²⁶ This thesis adds to Bruley's study by examining how the pre-school children of mothers carrying out war-work were cared for in Birmingham during the Second World War.

An additional study by Jennifer Marchbank's *Women, Power and Policy*, offers an analysis of policy making for gender equality, paying particular attention to post-war childcare services. Marchbank believes that 'if we understand the methods used by patriarchal systems to keep [Women's Interest Issues] off the agenda, marginalise and delegitimise them then we shall be able to devise strategies for effectively challenging the patriarchal status quo'. She believes nondecision-making theory 'can offer some answers to why and how Women's Interest Issues are marginalised'.²⁷ Marchbank explores how motherhood affects gender roles and how gender roles relate to policy.²⁸ Although her study relates to post-war childcare, she provides a history of childcare policy, especially during the Second World War, presenting an overview of the provision available nationally.²⁹ She argues that although the focus of her study is on 'the policy area of childcare', the 'arguments made and the structures and policies described are transferable to the whole arena of women's interests and other marginalised issues'. Marchbank suggests 'policymaking does not occur in a political, let alone social, vacuum'... 'an issue can benefit from fashionability, public identification with the subject or simply from frequent recurrence'... 'an issue may be adversely affected by poor articulation,

²⁶ Bruley, S. (ed.), *Working for Victory: A Diary of Life in a Second World War Factory* (Stroud, 2010).

²⁷ Nondecision-making theory argues that subtle and covert uses of power can be, and are, used in the policy process to maintain the status quo. The existence of nondecision-making theory was achieved by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1970). Marchbank, J., *Women, Power and Policy: Comparative Studies of Childcare* (London, 2000).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

a lack of public sympathy, a deficiency of data, being over technical or due to the existence of a counter consensus'. Amongst others these factors can 'impinge on the acceptability of an issue for policy-makers and for the public'.³⁰ Marchbank's study concludes that nondecision-making theory is a complex phenomenon involving the actions and inactions of the whole social system, inside and out of the decision-making body, in tune with the findings of the local study of wartime pre-school childcare for this thesis. For example, Birmingham officials experienced resistance from central government to establish a policy to provide wartime nurseries but on the other hand mothers were slow to use the service once provided (see Chapter 4). These significant studies have informed this study on attitudes towards women, motherhood, and wartime policy making; however, they offer a national rather than a local perspective. This thesis aims to integrate an understanding of what was happening in Birmingham into these established narratives and the next section explores local literature to address this imbalance.

Regional as well as national distinctiveness is important. Locally, how the care of the pre-school child of working mothers was dealt with has not previously been considered worthy of study. General publications on historical Birmingham formed the base for this research covering a number of themes relevant to this thesis.³¹ However, local publications purporting to cover industry during the Second World

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Timmins, S. (ed.), *Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District* (London, 1967); Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974); Hopkins, E., *Birmingham: The First Manufacturing Town in the World, 1760-1840* (London, 1989); Chinn, C., *Brum Undaunted: Birmingham during the Blitz* (Birmingham, 1996); Hopkins, E., *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City* (Stroud, 2001); Chinn, C. (ed.), *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003); Chinn, C. and Dick, M. (eds.), *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World of Work* (Liverpool, 2016).

War reduce evidence of the workers' experience to a few sentences.³² Birmingham's industrial history reflects the national picture of an industrial society, but as Katherine Jenns suggests, 'In other respects, however, the pattern of employment, work and enterprise are peculiar to Birmingham'.³³ Similarly this applies to the evolution of pre-school childcare. An official history by Anthony Sutcliffe and Roger Smith remains the only academic study which looks at Birmingham during the Second World War even though it was written decades ago. Their brief wartime chapter is intended to set the scene in Birmingham to enable them through a number of themes to attempt to describe the changes which had a direct effect or indirect results emanating from the war years. However, they did not deal with women or wartime nurseries.³⁴ Local studies such as those published by Carl Chinn or pictorial accounts by Alton Douglas are for public rather than academic consumption, although the images can provide a visual insight into wartime conditions.³⁵ Neither, Chinn nor Douglas deal with the subject of wartime pre-school childcare. A critical bibliography for Birmingham's history edited by Chinn was of value to this study as it pointed towards relevant secondary and primary sources.³⁶ For example, Katherine Jenns chapter on Work and Employment in Birmingham was particularly helpful.³⁷ Additional research has been carried out by Maggie Andrews who focuses on domesticity and femininity on the Home Front during the First and Second World Wars. Andrews' study on women

³² Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974).

³³ Jenns, K., 'Work and Employment in Birmingham', in: Chinn, C. (ed.) *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003), pp. 200-222.

³⁴ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974).

³⁵ Chinn, C., *Brum Undaunted: Birmingham during the Blitz* (Birmingham, 1996); Douglas, A., *Birmingham at War: A Pictorial Account volume 1* (Birmingham, 1997).

³⁶ Chinn, C. (ed.), *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003).

³⁷ Jenns, K., 'Work and Employment in Birmingham', in: Chinn, C. (ed.) *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003), pp. 200-222.

and the evacuation of children is of particular value to this research. It offers an opportunity to consider the difficulties faced by mothers during the evacuation of their children, a perspective to which this thesis adds.³⁸

Keen to promote their wartime contribution, a number of celebratory histories were produced by specific firms such as Joseph Lucas and BSA but they do not deal with the differing needs of working mothers with pre-school children.³⁹ Other than these, very little has been published on Birmingham industrial wartime history although a study of the West Midlands during this period by David Thoms is useful for understanding what was happening in the Midlands as 'an investigation of selected themes within the particular context of the Midland region'.⁴⁰ It is the absence of social history that this thesis aims to rectify. Historiography discussed offers a national perspective, while confirming the dearth of local studies on wartime industry particularly those studying working mothers with their differing needs such as pre-school childcare while they carried out essential war work. The purpose of the next section of the review is to consider studies into pre-school childcare provision.

Pre-school childcare provision

Historically, education and childcare for all age groups evolved due to individuals who had a vision of what childhood might be. Traditionally, educational histories relating to the pre-school child have mainly focused on the ideas of the great educators or psychologists with very little consideration given to the historical

³⁸ Andrews, M., 'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women: A Domestic Response to a National Problem', *Women's History Review* (June 24, 2014), volume 24, issue 1, pp. 112-130.

³⁹ Ward, D. M., *The Other Battle: Being a History of the Birmingham Small Arms Co. Ltd* (York, 1946); Nockolds, H., *Lucas: The First Hundred Years, volume II; The Successors* (Newton Abbot, 1978).

⁴⁰ Thoms, D., *War, Industry and Society: The Midlands 1939-45* (London, 1989).

development of provision for this age group.⁴¹ Thomas Raymont, Phoebe Cusden and Tessa Blackstone cover the growth of national pre-school education from its origins in the nineteenth century.⁴² Raymont's publication highlights the causes of success and failure in the past in order to guide future improvement. Cusden's work produced on behalf of the Nursery School Association takes a Whiggish view by suggesting that development follows a path of inevitable progress and improvement. Modern studies move beyond that viewpoint.⁴³ Produced more than thirty years after Cusden, Blackstone's study builds on earlier work by considering the political, economic, and demographic factors and the wider social changes, which explained the growing demand for pre-school education. Blackstone's *A Fair Start* is valuable for its data, insight and analysis, with the early chapters providing an historical investigation of pre-school education from 1900 to 1965.⁴⁴ The remaining chapters describe the nature and extent of provision available at the end of this period. Blackstone compares four authorities broadly similar in size and other characteristics, two large, affluent and rapidly expanding counties and two small heavily working-class which make dissimilar provision of pre-school education. Variation, she concludes is due to the differing attitudes of policy makers, the distribution of power amongst officials and up to a point the effectiveness of pressure groups. Notwithstanding the fact that the four case studies carried out by Blackstone cover a later period than this study, they are helpful in identifying the factors, which

⁴¹ Rusk, R. R., *A History of Infant Education* (London, 1933); Isaacs, S., *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years* (London, 1960).

⁴² Raymont, T., *A History of the Education of Young Children* (London, 1937); Cusden, P. E., *The English Nursery School* (London, 1938); Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971).

⁴³ The Nursery School Association was formed in 1923, and merged with the National Society for Children's Nurseries formed in 1906 (previously the National Society of Day Nurseries) to become the British Association for Early Childhood Education in 1973. LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, Biographical history.

⁴⁴ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971).

are significant in explaining local variations. Nursery provision was at the discretion of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs), this is an important part of the picture. This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between Birmingham LEA and central government in relation to pre-school childcare which has received little attention, therefore contributing to local historiography. Another study, Nanette Whitbread's publication, written as an introductory text for students, succeeds in what it is designed to do, but does not make any major new contribution to knowledge.⁴⁵

Standard general histories of education in Britain are of little value as they commonly offer a conventional account of wartime evacuation, before passing swiftly on to the Education Act of 1944 and give little consideration to pre-school childcare or what happened in between. However, a study in 2015, by Angela Davis, investigates how competing ideas about child development influenced the provision, practice and experience of childcare for the under-fives since 1939. It provides an opportunity for comparison as it examines the theory, practice and experience of English pre-school childcare from 1939-2010, using Coventry, Oxfordshire and the London Borough of Camden as case studies.⁴⁶ Of particular interest was Davis' exploration of spending on day nurseries in these three localities which reveals 'patterns of provision were determined by complex interlinking factors; from the peculiarities of local labour markets and populations to the individual attitudes of office-holders in local government'. For example, Coventry had a high employment rate among mothers and a 'pro-nursery' outlook by successive Medical Officers of Health. Oxfordshire's provision was 'virtually non-existent as a result of ideological opposition to publicly

⁴⁵ Whitbread, N., *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School: A History of Infant and Nursery Education in Britain* (London, 1972).

⁴⁶ Davis, A., *Pre-school Childcare in England, 1939-2010: Theory, Practice and Experience* (Manchester, 2015).

subsidised childcare and a broader climate of disapproval towards working mothers. Camden occupied an intermediate position. They maintained a 'significant level of provision to serve its socially and ethnically diverse population but coming under sustained pressure to limit eligibility to the poorest families or those with 'special needs'.⁴⁷ Davis' believes 'that wartime events such as evacuation, the establishment of war nurseries and the development of child attachment theories profoundly influenced post-war ideas about the importance of promoting the mother-child bond'. Which she argues, 'led to childcare being seen as primarily the responsibility of individual families and to a political unwillingness to invest in services'.⁴⁸ However, this author believes that pre-school childcare provision before the Second World War was always a low priority in central government circles. This thesis reveals how individual office holders in Birmingham's local government were pro-active in offering this provision before and during the hostilities. Davis' view that young children from good homes did not require this type of service emanated from the hostilities is shown in this thesis to have been dominant before the war.

From a regional perspective, standard educational histories of Birmingham only fleetingly describe childcare or education for the pre-school child. Conventional histories of Birmingham covering the Second World War contain isolated references to pre-school childcare without any detailed analysis, although there is one unpublished work on which this author can build. In her 1964 thesis, Joan Malden carried out a comparative study *The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962*, between Birmingham, Smethwick, Warwick and the State of Western

⁴⁷ McCarthy, H., 'Pre-School Childcare in England, 1939-2010: Theory, Practice and Experience, Book Review', *The English Historical Review* (August 2016), volume 131, issue 551, pp. 967-968.

⁴⁸ Palmer, A., 'Pre-school Childcare in England, 1939-2010: Theory, Practice and Experience, Book Review', *Cultural and Social History* (2016), volume 13, issue 3, pp. 434-436.

Australia.⁴⁹ Malden provided a brief narrative of the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre project using the preface of Dr Blatz's work, *Understanding the Young Child* as her source.⁵⁰ There is a lack of critical and contextual analysis in her work and Malden's ability to access official wartime documents in the 1960s was probably restricted due to closure periods. This thesis moves beyond Malden's work by looking at the project's origins, staffing, pedagogy and material culture. Another work, a general history of Birmingham edited by Carl Chinn and Malcolm Dick was of value as *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World* contains a general survey of education, 'The Policy and Practice of Enlightened Education' by Ruth Watts which deals with education and women, exploring how Birmingham became renown as a leader in education, however, she does not pay attention to nursery education.⁵¹ There is, then, little on Birmingham's activities and what exists is not explanatory or evaluative. Therefore, little of relevance to the study of local pre-school childcare has been published. This makes any generalised understanding of how this facility may have changed over time and how any wartime provision developed challenging to achieve. An important aspect of Birmingham wartime nursery provision is the project carried out at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre by William Blatz and his team. The next section of the review considers published research relating to this project.

⁴⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection, Malden, J., 'The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962' (University of Birmingham, 1964).

⁵⁰ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi; LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection, Malden, J., 'The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962' (University of Birmingham, 1964).

⁵¹ Chinn, C. and Dick, M. (eds.), *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World of Work* (Liverpool, 2016); Watts, R., 'The Policy and Practice of Enlightened Education', in: Chinn, C. and Dick, M. (eds.), *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool, 2016), pp. 193-213.

William Blatz

Little secondary material on the work carried out in Birmingham by this Canadian Team is available; what exists is largely contained in Canadian publications on child psychology, but there is none in British sources except for the unpublished work of Joan Malden mentioned previously.⁵² An early study of Blatz is a biography by Jocelyn Motyer Raymond.⁵³ This provides a number of dimensions of Blatz's life and contains ideas and evidence of his thinking but is a celebratory study rather than an analytical piece of work. One review in the *Toronto Star* pointed to at least one inaccuracy in Raymond's celebratory book and suggested that the author tended to gloss over any negative aspects of Blatz's work, citing as one example his care of the Dionne Quintuplets. There is also confusion about Blatz's date of birth.⁵⁴

Analytical studies by specialists in child education have been important in building up a history of William Blatz's wartime project in Birmingham. Larry Prochner and Nina Howe focus on early childcare education and early childcare development respectively and point towards the potential for investigation of the Canadians' work in Birmingham.⁵⁵ Similarly, papers produced by Mary J Wright, one of the Canadian Team who worked with Dr William Blatz in the city, focus on his theories, personality and character. Wright's knowledge of Blatz and the Birmingham project provided

⁵² LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection, Malden, J., 'The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962' (University of Birmingham, 1964).

⁵³ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991).

⁵⁴ *The Toronto Star*, 'The power of nurture over nature' (September 7, 1991), p. 15. There appears to be confusion about whether Blatz was born in 1894 or 1895. All references to his year of birth state 1895 although documentation relating to his retirement benefits implies that Blatz thought he was born in 1894; Winestock, S. L., 'William Emet Blatz: The Development of a Developmental Psychologist', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (York University, Ontario, 1994), p. 16. By examining the Canadian official return of births, this author can confirm that Blatz was born June 30, 1895.

⁵⁵ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

important evidence for this thesis.⁵⁶ From a local perspective, the Canadian sources offer the most relevant secondary support for this research. The few papers published about Blatz are written by those who worked closely with him with the intention of celebrating child study in Canada with Blatz as its leader and need to be treated critically as historical documents. In her unpublished thesis, Sheri Winestock goes so far as to write: 'Those surrounding Blatz not only wrote celebratory histories, but they were also careful to protect his image' by attempting to dissuade anything written about him or his work they felt did not meet his usual standards.⁵⁷ There is a lack of critical and contextual analysis in work written about Blatz.⁵⁸ This thesis provides the first comprehensive study of the team's experimental wartime work using material from a variety of Canadian and British official and private sources and as such adds significantly to historiography. The following two sections pay attention to studies on nurseries as living places and spaces. By studying buildings within the wartime nursery setting we can consider how social inequalities and differences may be reproduced and contested.

Nursery Buildings

Nationally, before the Second World War, the number of nursery school premises erected was small and styles differed, so that a standard for wartime provision was not available. Early pioneers of nursery education managed to bring about a

⁵⁶ Wright, M. J., 'William Emet Blatz', in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211; Wright, M. J., 'Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the Teachings of W. E. Blatz', in: Prochner, L. and Howe, N. (eds.), *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past, Present and Future* (Vancouver, 2000), pp. 96-114; Wright, M. J., 'W. E. Blatz, The Person and his Work', in: Volpe, R. (ed.) *The Secure Child: Timeless Lessons in Parenting and Childhood Education* (United States, 2010), pp. 15-41.

⁵⁷ Winestock, S. L., 'William Emet Blatz: The Development of a Developmental Psychologist', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (York University, Ontario, 1994), pp. 13, 428.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

convergence of progressive thinking which could and often did succeed in transforming the lives of children for the better by sharing their new-found knowledge with others in publications.⁵⁹ These accounts are pertinent to this study because representations of experiences of people within these institutions are limited. The publications produced by these pioneers, along with a Board of Education report on Infant and Nursery Schools, *The English Nursery School*, and various pamphlets issued by the Nursery School Association have created a useful base for this study.⁶⁰ English modernist architects, H Myles Wright and R. Gardner-Medwin, explored nursery and elementary school architecture from a national perspective in their 1938 publication. Even though Birmingham nursery designs do not feature in this publication, it outlines the thought processes influencing design at the time.⁶¹ An historical overview supplied by modern architect, Mark Dudek, provides the context for understanding how the thoughts on nursery architecture developed but is not helpful in illuminating the local experience. Dudek specialises in Nursery and Kindergarten design but his works typically reflect international comparisons post-war.⁶² Historians of education, Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor, have explored the shaping experiences of school buildings on learning and pedagogy.⁶³ They consider 'the sense of adult-child interaction within a site designed for teaching and

⁵⁹ McMillan, M., *The Nursery School* (London, 1919); Owen, G. (ed.), *Nursery School Education* (London, 1923); Isaacs, S., *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years* (London, 1960).

⁶⁰ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933); Cusden, P. E., *The English Nursery School* (London, 1938).

⁶¹ Myles Wright, H. and Gardner-Medwin, R., *The Design of Nursery and Elementary Schools* (London, 1938).

⁶² Dudek, M., *Kindergarten Architecture: Space for the Imagination* (London, 2000); Dudek, M., *Nurseries: A Design Guide* (Oxford, 2013).

⁶³ Burke, C., 'Containing the School Child: Architecture and Pedagogies', *Paedagogica Historica* (August 2005), volume 41, numbers 4 and 5, pp. 489-494; Grosvenor, I., 'The Art of Seeing: Promoting Design in Education in 1930s England', *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* (August, 2005), volume 41, issues 4 and 5, pp. 507-534; Burke, C., 'Inside Out: A Collaborative Approach to Designing Schools in England, 1945-1972', *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* (2009), volume 45, issue 3, pp. 421-433.

learning and also in the sense of how that interaction is subject to prevailing contemporary discourse outside the school environment'.⁶⁴ Burke's interest focuses on educational history through architecture and pedagogy by drawing attention to the various processes influencing school design; however, she does not pay attention to nursery schools. Grosvenor's *Paedagogica Historica* article draws attention to the 'Exhibition of Materials for Use in Elementary Schools' in 1937; however, his interest primarily lies with the modernists and progressive educationists. Nevertheless, it was helpful in illuminating the local experience and offered direction towards relevant primary sources.⁶⁵ This local case study of Birmingham's wartime nurseries contributes to historiography through a general approach to the theme which considers the physical and material environment of these establishments to throw light on experiences inside these institutions. Nurseries are not empty shells, if they are not to become childminding establishments; they require appropriate staff an area of literature considered in the next section.

Nursery Workforce

Basic details about early national nursery nurse training, including a short chapter covering the Second World War, are documented in a publication by Bessie Wright, advisor to the National Nursery Examination Board 1984-1997.⁶⁶ *A Social History of Education in England* and *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board* provide an historical background and context but they do not drill down into the

⁶⁴ Burke, C., 'Containing the School Child: Architecture and Pedagogies', *Paedagogica Historica* (August 2005), volume 41, numbers 4 and 5, pp. 489-494.

⁶⁵ Grosvenor, I., 'The Art of Seeing: Promoting Design in Education in 1930s England', *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* (August, 2005), volume 41, issues 4 and 5, pp. 507-534.

⁶⁶ Wright, B., *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board* (St. Albans, 1999).

details of the local or personal experience.⁶⁷ For example John Lawson and Harold Silver explore the development of national education from a social perspective, but only fleetingly mention nursery education. On the other hand the study by Bessie Wright examines nursery nurse training qualifications from a national perspective. This thesis reveals a personal perspective of nursery workers and has shown that without this extensive female workforce, wartime nurseries could not have existed as places for child development as opposed to a childminding service. By using Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre as a case study, it analyses a group of people previously hidden from view.

To conclude, histories which explore the home front and working women during the Second World War have, for the most part, offered insights into broad approaches and general theories but not into the detail of what is happening at a local level. They have been good in providing context for this study, but they don't deal with the individual experiences at the local level particularly Birmingham. The question of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare provision remains open, and the project carried out by William Blatz is largely ignored. This lack of literature raises questions. In order to understand the development of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare, it is important to establish whether a demand for this provision existed. If a demand existed how were the young children of working mothers cared for before the hostilities and how beneficial were local authority childcare facilities creating their provision? How did these establishments operate in the real world and were they effective? The overarching questions appear to be what if any constraints affected

⁶⁷ Lawson, J., and Silver, H., *A Social History of Education in England* (London, 1976); Wright, B., *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board* (St. Albans, 1999).

the development of pre-school childcare development in Birmingham and how did the local authority overcome any challenges. In order to show the extent to which Birmingham was pursuing an innovatory or particularly interesting path towards their wartime pre-school childcare it is necessary to interrogate a range of primary sources, to try to answer research questions about the nature of childcare, innovation and the experiences of individuals. This thesis draws together a number of themes and the approach is further developed in the section on methodology.

Methodology

This thesis is primarily a case study of the local development of wartime pre-school childcare, the work of women in war time and the providers of childcare using Birmingham as the geographical focus. It is a study of British pre-school childcare in a local context but includes an experiment which had significance beyond Birmingham.

As the lead for the Midland Civil Defence Region 9, Birmingham Council was responsible for a number of interesting wartime nursery projects which were carried out within its broad area of responsibility, such as one in the Potteries, originally funded by the American Red Cross.⁶⁸ It became clear early in this research that to study the whole region was beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, this research focuses on pre-school childcare within Birmingham's city boundaries. Notwithstanding the importance of residential and twenty-four-hour nurseries to wartime childcare, they were excluded as they were a different type of arrangement. Residential nurseries cared for the pre-school children full time and mothers could

⁶⁸ TNA, MH55/1704, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries Established by News Chronicle.

visit on their day off. Twenty-four-hour nurseries were dedicated to looking after the children of mothers carrying out shift work or working nights and requiring rest during the day. Buildings, equipment and staffing ratios for these establishments presented different challenges to officials. Except for a contextual chapter outlining the early growth of Birmingham pre-school childcare, the study is set within a time frame from 1939 to 1945. Despite the fact that this wartime facility was required for a number of years post-war, in reality the growth ceased in 1944. Like its development, the wind-down of the provision was long and complex. For this reason, the study ceases in 1945. Officials made the assumption that the care of pre-school children in nurseries would fall upon women and not men. The research for this thesis indicates that except for the involvement of Blatz, no men were employed in Birmingham wartime nurseries. It brought to light archive and printed material which has not been utilised before, including a remarkable collection from Mary J Wright, which was bequeathed to this author following Mary's death in 2014.

Geographic Information System

An exercise combining historical data with a Geographic Information System (GIS) enabled analysis of the physical location of Birmingham wartime nurseries to be made. Buildings for wartime nurseries and their location were also important. Maps created from this exercise provided a pictorial perspective which supplemented documentary sources in showing the physical scale and constraints of nursery provision carried out in Birmingham. A database was created by the author to compile the information collected from various sources before being transferred into GIS by Dr Janet Sullivan. GIS is a computer-based system designed to capture, manage, analyse and present all types of geographical data which can then be

presented in a variety of ways, including maps. Difficulties were experienced when originally compiling the information due to changes during the period studied. For example, buildings could close as quickly as they opened due to bomb damage or if they were reclaimed for another use such as civil defence. Understandably, wartime record-keeping was not always accurate. A name assigned to a nursery could differ according to which official department discussed it. Accuracy was helped by cross-referencing the nursery information collated with the building application plan register for the period held at the Library of Birmingham Archives and Collections.⁶⁹

Official records and administration

This section looks at the different types of sources used for this study. Central or local government papers, mass observation reports, oral testimony transcripts, Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) narrative reports and a variety of pamphlets and printed material were examined.⁷⁰ Reports, images and posters can be selective in what they record – for instance, if they were intended for propaganda purposes. Censorship of newspapers was normal probably for security reasons or to protect the morale of those on the home front or in the armed forces. Between May and September 1940, the Ministry of Information compiled daily reports on the morale of the nation for circulation within Whitehall.⁷¹ Any low morale or worries about the home front could filter through and affect men in the military concerned about their

⁶⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/GG/D/1/7/1/1/51-2, Register of New Buildings, 1939-1945.

⁷⁰ WVS narrative reports were completed on a regular basis in each region throughout the Second World War, covering a wide range of subjects and are available online. Some regions were better than others in completing and submitting these reports. This source has been recognised by UNESCO as among the UK's most exceptional, but lesser known documentary riches. WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018).

⁷¹ Addison, P. and Crang, J. A., *Listening to Britain: Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour, May to September 1940* (London, 2010).

families. These reports contribute by providing a more comprehensive account of Birmingham pre-school childcare during the Second World War. There are sometimes contradictions in the evidence. The author has tried to illuminate these where applicable. Caveats are important, as the child's perspective is noticeable by its absence. These can still make an important contribution; however, those childhood statements used in this study were transmitted through an adult. Even though it is not especially a study of class, this research raises the nature of interaction between people of different social classes and genders. The Canadian Team in particular arrived to work and mix with communities not experienced by them before. Officials were judgemental or displayed a lack of understanding of working mothers and their children.

Mass Observation

This study has benefited from evidence from the wartime project Mass Observation (MO). Working-class women are traditionally hidden from history: few of them documented their experience. Locally, however, women contributed to a Mass Observation (MO) factory study during the Second World War, which gave them a presence. MO began in 1937 to record civilian life during the Second World War. There were two particular phases in the recording life of the MO archive, with the first running from 1937 to 1950.⁷² Those who took part in MO were not usually in positions of power or influence, and, generally, the observers were middle class.⁷³ At the time MO was criticised on the grounds that its methods were unscientific as they

⁷² The Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex, The Keep, Brighton, BN1 9BP.

⁷³ Garfield, S., *We are at War: The Remarkable Diaries of Five Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Reading, 2009), p.2; Hulme, T., 'Using the Mass-Observation Archive: Possibilities and Problems' (Case study prepared for the British Library, undated), p.5.

employed a range of experimental and unorthodox techniques to assess popular attitudes. Today historians place a great deal of reliance on it as a source. MO was commissioned by Government officials to undertake a number of studies on their behalf. For the first part of the war at least, the diarists' observations were reported to the Home Intelligence Office in order to understand public morale.⁷⁴ Few local working women submitted diaries, but reports following MO investigators' visits to one particular Birmingham factory revealed the attitudes of employees at that time. Those reports displayed the power and social relationships of the workforce.

A number of interesting studies have been carried out and published exploring several aspects of British life during the Second World War using MO material. Most follow a similar format by choosing a small number of diarists to present personal experiences. Publications by Simon Garfield, Jennifer Purcell and Dorothy Sheridan were examined for this research as they provided an opportunity to explore employment, location and domestic situations.⁷⁵ Due to the passing of time very few Mass Observers are still available to share their story, so these studies provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard. However, in terms of exploring gender and class, these volumes are limited. The main contributors to MO appear to be middle-class women.

⁷⁴ Addison, P. and Crang, J. A., *Listening to Britain: Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour, May to September 1940* (London, 2010), p. xiii.

⁷⁵ Garfield, S., *We are at War: The Remarkable Diaries of Five Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Reading, 2009); Sheridan, D., *Wartime Women: A Mass-Observation Anthology, 1937-45* (London, 2009); Purcell, J., *Domestic Soldiers: Six Women's Lives in the Second World War* (London, 2011).

Oral interviews

The women most likely to use pre-school childcare and the majority of those employed in the nurseries were in all probability working class; there were exceptions: for example, the Canadian Team were not working class. The challenge was how to include them within this research. An original intention was to carry out an oral history project but despite advertising for those who experienced the provision at the time, individuals were not forthcoming and none were secured through other contacts. Interviews for other wartime oral histories, however, were interrogated, such as collections held by the British Library and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. One source was the Trade Union Congress Library collection *Voices from the home front*, but it was not forthcoming.⁷⁶ Mary J Wright, an important contributor to Blatz's Birmingham project, was interviewed by Prochner and Howe. They were particularly generous in providing the author with a full transcript of their interview.⁷⁷ Interviews were also carried out by the author with Wright and Janet Sullivan, a nursery nurse during the 1960s.⁷⁸

Oral testimonies are important pieces of evidence which allow the voice of ordinary people to be heard alongside the written record. A number of oral history research projects into women's history have been carried out by Penny Summerfield and Elizabeth Roberts.⁷⁹ Historians who accept written sources sometimes reject oral

⁷⁶ TBL, C880/06/01, Sound and Moving Image Collection, Women Conscientious Objectors, Interview with Florence Salway (July 25, 1997); BMT (BMAG), City Sound Archive, Second World War; London Metropolitan University, 'Voices from the Home Front' [Online], <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk> (Accessed: August 18, 2019).

⁷⁷ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁷⁸ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013 and January 28, 2014); Dr Janet Sullivan (February 15, 2017).

⁷⁹ Roberts, E. A. M., *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984); Roberts, E. A. M., *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford, 1995);

history as a source believing that interviewees may be affected by the passage of time, because of memory loss or changes in perception. However, written documents can also be created after an event in the same way as oral interviews. As there is no one way of reading and interpreting historical documents, similarly, this applies to the analysis of oral interviews. John Tosh for one offers guidance on analysing problematic oral testimonies.⁸⁰ Evidence does not emerge untouched by historians' concerns and prejudices; it needs to be teased out and confirmed with the use of many sources, as should these interviews. Oral testimonies are valuable to establish attitudes and understand how people felt, which cannot always be inferred from another source. By not providing people with a platform on which to share their stories, historians may be missing an area of research which is extremely important. For example, one pre-recorded oral interview of a female conscientious objector was central for this study.⁸¹

Official records

Official administrative records held at The National Archives, Kew were examined, including those of the Cabinet Office, the Ministries of Housing and Local Government, Education, Health, Labour, the Treasury, Board of Trade, Intelligence and the Medical Research Council.⁸² The administrative records of Birmingham's council, education authority, public health department and their many sub-

Summerfield, P., *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998).

⁸⁰ Tosh, J., *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London, 1991).

⁸¹ TBL, C880/06/01, Sound and Moving Image Collection, Women Conscientious Objectors, Interview with Florence Salway (July 25, 1997).

⁸² TNA, CAB 67, 102, 118 (Cabinet Office); DO 131 (University of Toronto); ED 66, 69, 102, 138 (Education Department); HLG 7 (Ministry of Housing and Local Government); INF 1, 3 (Ministry of Information); LAB 2, 26 (Ministry of Labour); MH 52, 55 (Ministry of Health); MUN 4 (Ministry of Munitions of War); RG 23 (Central Office of Information); T 161 (Treasury).

committees held by the Library of Birmingham Archives and Collections were explored.⁸³ They contained information about central and local policy, sometimes offering an indication of official or personal viewpoints. However, as government documents, their cultural and political content should be taken into consideration. Many of these papers are being digitised, for example, the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, and are becoming available online, making them much easier to access.⁸⁴ Even though digitisation has made access to official papers easier, a significant amount of documentation remains in its original format. However, the hostilities created an unusual frustration for the researcher. Paper shortages existed during the war and wasters received fines.⁸⁵ Wartime reports and correspondence were therefore kept to a minimum and events were not always as well documented as they would have been under normal conditions. Many documents were handwritten and difficult to read. Sometimes reports were written on the back of paper used for other purposes, making correspondence trails difficult to follow. It was not always clear where one page followed another in documents. At times reports were written on both sides of thin copy paper, used by typists which were difficult to read and prone to damage or they faded through age. Because of the complexity of wartime pre-school arrangements, documents were widely dispersed across a number of official departments and subject to varying, sometimes diverse conditions of access. Governments, whatever their political complexion, depended on confidentiality and this requirement was interpreted by applying a 'Closed Period' to

⁸³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

⁸⁴ ProQuest [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: September 17, 2015).

⁸⁵ Nicholson, V., *Millions like us: Women's lives in the Second World War* (London, 2011), p.176.

most documents.⁸⁶ This can vary depending upon the department of origin. Some Second World War documents have a closure period of seventy-five years, while others have been released for public viewing. Despite their limitations these reports offer an official perspective on the evolving situation and growth of wartime childcare provision.

Other archival collections are those of the Selly Oak Nursery School and the Birmingham Nursery School Movement. Julia Lloyd (1867-1955), one of the founders of the local free kindergarten movement, played an important part in this study.⁸⁷ Her fastidious collection of material related to the development of the kindergarten and its transition to nursery schools, provided the groundwork for the chapter on early Birmingham nursery education.⁸⁸

Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and other printed material

National and local newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and other printed material enhanced this study by sometimes filling gaps where other sources failed.

Newspapers describe particular events; however, they also enable us to identify the general attitude at the time, particularly local ones, but they still had their limitations in times of war. As the hostilities progressed the size of newspapers was reduced in terms of pages due to the paper shortages discussed earlier.⁸⁹ However, their examination still revealed a wealth of information highlighting aspects of wartime

⁸⁶ Tosh, J., *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London, 1991), p. 50.

⁸⁷ Watts, R., 'Julia Lloyd' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

⁸⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection; LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31, Birmingham Nursery School Movement.

⁸⁹ Garfield, S., *We are at War: The Remarkable Diaries of Five Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Reading, 2009), p. 202.

nurseries as they developed. Newspapers recorded appeals to increase nursery provision, for the recruitment of staff or for donations of equipment which helped to plot the progress of the development. Online access to wartime newspapers was not always available at the beginning of this research, which necessitated viewing the printed collection held by the British Library.⁹⁰ As more became available following digitisation, access became considerably easier.⁹¹ The correspondence pages of *Nursery World* magazine revealed the nursery workers' perspective, not found elsewhere.⁹² From its inception, the Nursery School Association (NSA) was prolific in its publication of guidance pamphlets and wartime was no exception.⁹³ These publications are significant for identifying its aims, objectives and recommendations over the preceding and wartime years. However, it should be noted that government officials sometimes considered the aims of the NSA unrealistic or unachievable. WVS narrative reports were filed from 1938 until 1992 and illustrate everyday activities of centres which are available through an online database. Of special importance are the ones submitted during the Second World War. Not all survive but some for Birmingham still exist and are available. By detailing the wide range of wartime services provided by members of the WVS, these reports contribute to this study by recording the wide range of wartime services members of the WVS provided to help locally.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ British Newspaper Archive [Online], <http://www.britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk> (Accessed: October 2015-March 2020).

⁹¹ TBL, Collection Guides, 'Newspapers' [Online] <https://www.bl.uk> (Accessed: April 7, 2019).

⁹² TBL, *Nursery World* (LOU.LON 375,524,350,252,278,334,359), 1939-1945.

⁹³ LSE, Library Archives & Special Collections, GB 97, BAECE 13.

⁹⁴ WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018).

From the 1980s onwards a large number of working-class autobiographies were written and published.⁹⁵ Although these publications have strengths in terms of directing towards further research, memories could be clouded as they were written years after 'the events they describe'.⁹⁶ Those read to date provide very little detail about the local working mother's wartime perspective or for how their pre-school children were cared while they worked.

Landscapes and building

This study benefited from visits to the sites of remaining Birmingham wartime nurseries. Most significant was West Heath Nursery, one of the few temporary wartime nursery hutments in the city still being used for its original purpose. The author was allowed access to a small private collection of documents pertaining to the 1940s held on its premises before meeting with the Head teacher who provided a tour of the building. Because this building has not changed significantly during the subsequent years, the visit provided a unique insight into the viability of the building and structure for everyday use.

William Blatz Collection, University of Toronto

Another successful research trip was made to the University of Toronto, from where in the 1940s a desire to help British pre-school children during the Second World War led to a unique project in Birmingham. This was managed by leading child psychologist, Canadian Dr William Blatz, and his small team. Blatz was known

⁹⁵ Need, L., *Struggling Manor: Inner City Birmingham in the 1920s* (Birmingham, 1993); Hughes, P., *My Mother's Son* (Studley, 1995); Butcher, H., *The Treacle Stick* (Warwick, 1999); Goldsworthy, J. (ed.), *The Girl from Hockley, Growing up in a Working-class Birmingham by Kathleen Dayus* (London, 2014).

⁹⁶ Chinn, C., 'The People of Birmingham', in: Chinn, C. (ed.) *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003), pp. 247-273.

throughout the world in circles of child psychology for his work with the Dionne Quintuplets who were the first-known surviving identical quintuplets in recorded history. These five babies – Annette, Cécile, Emilie, Marie and Yvonne – were born in a small farmhouse on May 28, 1934 near the French-Canadian village of Corbeil, Ontario.⁹⁷ The University of Toronto's archive holds a sizeable collection relating to Blatz's various projects; however, this research focused on material relating to the one at Garrison Lane, Birmingham.⁹⁸ Canadian journals tend to record Blatz and his team's presence in wartime Birmingham in a positive light, presenting them as civilising missionaries. The *Toronto Star Weekly*, for example, reported how the 'Canadians tackle the slums. Right in the middle of Birmingham's worst district 10 University of Toronto child specialists are rebuilding the characters of new Britons'.⁹⁹ For this reason, it was considered important to examine this collection first-hand, which included visitor's books, scrapbooks, correspondence and photographs. Correspondence in the collection was particularly revealing about Blatz's personal side rather than the professional persona he usually portrayed. Blatz's letters to his daughter, Gery, while in Birmingham, add another dimension to the study as he describes the places he visited, the people he met and day-to-day nursery life at Garrison Lane.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Wright, C., 'They Were Five: The Dionne Quintuplets Revisited', *Journal of Canadian Studies* (1994), volume 29, issue 4, pp. 5-14. Blatz's connection with the quintuplets is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁹⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection. The author is grateful to Dr Richard Volpe for agreeing to my examination of this collection.

⁹⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, 'Canadians tackle the slums' (November 7, 1942).

¹⁰⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection.

Mary J Wright Collection

The William Blatz Collection was supplemented by a fortuitous discovery, which led the author to secure a bequest of a private collection from one of the Canadian women, Mary J Wright, who came to Birmingham to work with Blatz on the project.¹⁰¹ This research benefited greatly from telephone conversations with Mary before she died in 2014 and from access to her private collection, particularly the visual material, which provides an insight into what Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre looked like at the time. These two significant collections enhanced the author's interpretation of the working-class community with which the Canadian Team worked.

The chapters

This thesis builds on scholarship which has sought to interpret women's contribution during the Second World War and interrogates a rare collection of primary sources. In so doing it contributes not only to women's and Birmingham's history but also to the histories of education and architecture. It approaches the subject from a previously unexplored aspect of Birmingham's Second World War history: pre-school childcare provision. The thesis investigates the effect that the Second World War had on Birmingham's pre-school childcare by interpreting and evaluating the local situation. Family wartime stories, genealogical research and an interest in Birmingham's wartime female workforce captured the interest of the author in this subject, investigated through six main themes. It begins by considering the wartime changes experienced by local workers to explain why such a large increase in pre-school childcare was required during the Second World War. The historical development of Birmingham pre-school childcare is explored to establish what

¹⁰¹ See acknowledgements.

existed in the city prior to the hostilities. Birmingham's actual wartime provision is then considered, highlighting its complexity before moving on to discover the Canadian connection. This is divided into two parts, the first outlining the significance of the team who carried out this project, the second revealing their experience of working with this local working-class community. The material culture of wartime nurseries is the focus of the next theme, as the struggles to provide buildings on a large scale under exceptional circumstances are explored. The final theme investigates how official policy was translated into local practice when staffing wartime nurseries. Through these themes, this research uncovers a picture of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare. It offers new evidence of local pedagogical experiments.

The results of the research dictated the order of this thesis. Framed within the structure of seven chapters, this study aims to explore the formation of Birmingham pre-school childcare between 1939 and 1945 from a number of perspectives, before discussing the research outcomes by way of a conclusion in the final chapter. To this end, Chapter 2 begins by considering the pressures which created the need to increase pre-school childcare in the city during the Second World War. Birmingham's historic industrial base ensured that it played a key role in manufacturing munitions for this war, which were required on a much larger scale. Social convention in the city did not frown on married women working; even so – early in the hostilities – local industry found itself with a deficit of labour. Mothers with previous employment experience could and would work but someone had to take on the responsibility for their pre-school children. The chapter examines how the industrial structure of the city was changing and challenged many traditional social, industrial and political

ideologies which in turn created a necessity to establish local wartime pre-school childcare.

Chapter 3 explores the national and local historical emergence of care for this age group. In doing so it considers the reasons which determined the need and demand for this type of care in Birmingham. It aims to examine the relative social positions and power relationships of those providing or using this facility. It considers how political, economic and demographic elements may have impeded any rate of growth up to 1939, and the extent to which Birmingham was innovatory in the development of its early childcare and nurseries. Crucially, it was these decisions when creating early childcare that established the framework on which the Second World War provision was built.

The various wartime childcare initiatives developed in Birmingham are explored in Chapter 4. It examines the social, political and cultural context within which these schemes developed, along with their success or failure. It considers how central guidance was interpreted locally and whether Birmingham's experience may have influenced pre-school childcare, nationally or in Canada.

Dr William Blatz and his Canadian Team are the focus for Chapters 5 and 6, and it seems appropriate to discuss them together here. Chapter 5 considers the Canadian Team who came like missionaries to Birmingham with pre-ordained ideas they wanted to implement in order to protect the mental health of these young children during the hostilities. The chapter explores Blatz's practice within an evolving tradition of child psychology in Canada, the Canadian team, and considers why

Birmingham was chosen for this project. Chapter 6 investigates how this Canadian team translated its Toronto experience into Birmingham wartime reality. It examines the challenges they met and how they dealt with them. Little is known of the families using Birmingham wartime nurseries; however, analysis of this team's archival collection provides a unique view into the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre and the local community.

Chapter 7 is a case study of the political, physical and material environment of Birmingham wartime nursery buildings in an attempt to throw light on relationships and experiences within them. The chapter aims to do this by exploring early nursery architecture nationally and locally. It then considers the reality of implementing central guidance when providing local wartime nurseries. Local provision is explored before moving on to examine life within these nurseries, the environment they served and the health of those children attending nurseries.

Chapter 8 investigates the creation of a wartime nursery workforce in Birmingham from an administrative and social perspective through three themes: recruitment, training and retention. It attempts to do this by investigating how a large suitable workforce was secured. The training itself and its relevance from the trainers' and trainees' perspective will be explored. Finally, the retention of this workforce is considered before attempting to quantify the economic value of pre-school childcare against the number of mothers released for industrial war-work.

In conclusion, Chapter 9 discusses the outcomes of this research. It shows the relevance of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare to mothers and local

industry. The wider implications are explored – for example, local nursery architecture, the wartime workforce, and educational experiments such as those carried out by the Canadian Team. While the research has revealed a number of possibilities to extend this area of study, this thesis was constrained by time and word restrictions. Suggestions for further studies are highlighted in the conclusion.

The following chapter provides a case study of Birmingham's wartime industrial workforce from a women's perspective to establish if there was a need or demand for pre-school childcare during the Second World War as it seeks to address the first key question.

CHAPTER 2: WAR-WORK AND BIRMINGHAM'S WOMEN WORKERS 1939-1945

Introduction

Birmingham's industry supplied a variety of military and other essential wartime products such as guns, ammunition, aircraft, tanks and air/sea rescue radio survival kits during the war.¹ Even though government officials recognised that Birmingham was likely to be a target for German bombing raids they placed munition contracts with local firms.² The expertise of its management and workforce, particularly its tradition of women's employment, was undoubtedly a deciding factor. Women employed in local industry before marriage or family commitments were a trained source, which was called upon to supplement the existing workforce, but central government was slow to recognise that this potential female workforce had particular needs, such as childcare. As war progressed the economic need to increase the workforce became clearer, as existing labour was depleted and without intervention, production levels would drop. Birmingham City Council and local industry were aware of the situation but lacked government approval to proceed in the establishment of pre-school childcare. Eventually, central government officials realised the only remaining available workforce was married women, some of whom would require such additional support. This led to Birmingham establishing a child-minding scheme and the largest number of wartime nurseries provided by any local

¹ Douglas, A., *Birmingham at War: A Pictorial Account volume 1* (Birmingham, 1997).

² Birmingham was classified as an intermediate zone, 'unsafe' and not free from danger' by the Air Council but the case for allowing the expansion of wartime manufacturing preparation to continue in the city and surrounding area was strong. Hornby, W., *History of the Second World War: Factories and Plant* (London, 1958), p. 286; Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), pp. 16-17.

authority outside of the London County Council.³ This chapter strives to address the first key question identified in the Introduction to the thesis: Why was there a need or demand for pre-school childcare in Birmingham during the Second World War?

Secondary studies of British industrial wartime production during the Second World War are not particularly helpful in supporting the research in this chapter. Most accounts of this subject are contained in general publications written about the home front and regional studies which look at experience on the ground are scarce. Moreover, they are not particularly helpful when trying to outline the workers' perspective, and, in particular, the female workforce experience is one substantial element commonly missing from publications usually written from a middle-class or male perspective.⁴ In order to find some answers to the research question, this study is reliant on primary material mainly in the form of central or local government reports and newspapers.⁵ An official collection of photographs taken in Birmingham by the Ministry of Information during the Second World War and held by the Imperial War Museum was of particular value.⁶ Though taken for propaganda purposes, it has a role to play in providing evidence. Very little personal documentation survives, for example, diaries which record the experiences of local working-class women during this period. The Mass Observation (MO) archive, usually a rich source of material

³ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

⁴ Terry-Chandler, F., 'Introduction to Birmingham Women's History', in: Chinn, C. (ed.) *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003), pp. 126-145.

⁵ TNA, CAB, War Cabinet, LAB, Ministry of Labour, INF, Home intelligence; TBL, Collection Guides, 'Newspapers' [Online] <https://www.bl.uk> (Accessed: April 7, 2019).

⁶ IWM, D 9050, D 9051, D 9052, D 9066, D 9067, *Ministry of Information Second World War Official Collection*, 'Nursery for working mothers: The work of Flint Green Road Nursery, Birmingham' (1942) [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: August 31, 2017).

about women's lives, contains very little of relevance to this research.⁷ It was unusual for Birmingham working-class women under wartime conditions to complete mass-observation diaries, keeping diaries after a long day's work, shopping and looking after families would not be a priority. Additional data collected by MO were particularly useful based on an investigative project carried out at Tube Investments (TI) Limited between June 29 and July 27, 1942. An undercover investigator in her report recorded her observations. She shared comments made by a number of individuals in the female workforce, which revealed details of working relationships and wartime life.⁸

This study begins by considering Birmingham's industrial importance historically as a munitions' supplier, and local preparations as the Second World War approached. The local workforce is then explored to find out who were the recipients of wartime pre-school childcare and the beliefs which may have kept some women out of the workplace. The chapter also looks at recruitment drives, advertising for female workers and women migrants to the city before assessing the economic value of working mothers of pre-school children as against the cost of staffing required to operate the nurseries. The chapter examines morale, productive output and possible causes of industrial absenteeism before summarising the research findings in the conclusion.

⁷ Mass-Observation was a pioneering British social research organisation, between 1937 and the early 1950s. Sheridan, D., 'Using the Mass-observation Archive as a Source for Women's Studies', *Women's History Review* (March 1, 1994), volume 3, issue 1, pp. 101-113.

⁸ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012).

Birmingham as a munitions' supplier

Due to Birmingham's historical importance as a munitions supplier, it was inevitable that its industry would play a large role during the Second World War. Since the seventeenth century, the city had a long tradition of supporting munitions production, an activity which massively expanded during the First World War.⁹ Birmingham's industrial importance and contribution to the First World War was recognised and acknowledged. During his Freedom of the City acceptance speech, Lloyd George, speaking not only as Prime Minister, but as the former Minister of Munitions announced: 'The country, the empire and the world owe to the skill, the ingenuity, the industry and the resources of Birmingham a deep debt of gratitude'.¹⁰ At the end of the hostilities in 1918, businesses reverted to normal production without many major complications. From the experience of local industries during the First World War it was clear that production could easily be transferred to munitions work again, leading to various firms being important in helping to secure government contracts for the city during the Second World War.¹¹ When awarding contracts officials had to consider the availability of a suitable workforce within that area; it was therefore sometimes a company's experience in employing large numbers of young women, which was the deciding factor.¹² In certain industries and in Birmingham, it was traditional or

⁹ White, H., and Trudgeon, R, 'Birmingham's Gun Quarter: A Skilled Trade in Decline', *Oral History* (Autumn, 1983), volume 11, issue 2, pp. 69-83.

¹⁰ Briggs, A., *History of Birmingham, volume II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London, 1952), p. 213.

¹¹ Tyler, E., 'Reynolds in Retrospect' [Online], [http:// www.reynoldstechnology.biz](http://www.reynoldstechnology.biz) (Accessed: September 22, 2012).

¹² Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 395.

acceptable for married women to work.¹³ This implied there was a large number of women experienced at working in industry to carry out war-work.

Preparation for wartime production began as early as 1934 in the Midlands when 'industrial leaders were quietly contacted, "contingency" plans drawn up, plant and storage space inventoried and the shadow factories prepared'.¹⁴ The shadow factories scheme was part of a significant re-armament programme in Britain during the 1930s and 1940s and there were several shadow factories throughout the country. 'Shadow factory' was a term used to describe duplicated facilities under the direct control of a parent company. These factories were financed by the state but managed by existing companies, usually experienced in automobile or electrical production, which were developed to increase, by mass production, equipment such as engines, tanks, aircraft and weapons. Birmingham had four 'shadow' aircraft factories: Castle Bromwich, Acocks Green, Solihull and Cofton Hackett. The Castle Bromwich factory alone was expected to employ between twelve and fifteen thousand people; as a brand-new factory this was a large workforce to supply.¹⁵ While government officials were making these wartime production preparations they realised the women's role in the wartime workforce would be more important than that in previous wars.¹⁶ Even so, they failed to recognise that some women, particularly mothers of pre-school children, would require support in order to work.

¹³ Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), p. 16.

¹⁴ Rowlands, M. B., *The West Midlands from AD 1000* (London, 1987), p. 353.

¹⁵ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 17.

¹⁶ Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 148.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, Birmingham's industrial base partly consisted of firms such as Austin, Lucas and GEC, which were among the country's largest employers. Other local factories had workforces, which ran to several thousands, but the area was also home to hundreds of small factories and workshops.¹⁷ If these businesses were going to develop as munitions firms, they needed to employ women because men were not available to the same extent as previously. Success depended on how effectively central and local government along with industry were going to manage this transition of women into the workforce.

During the Second World War, thousands of women took on extra paid work, whilst continuing with their domestic and family responsibilities. Their daily routine had little resemblance to that of the pre-war years. The homemaker's role was radically different as their family became separated by conscription or evacuation, basic goods became rationed, and schools either closed or reduced their hours. This was also compounded by the constant danger and threat of air raids. During the hostilities there was unparalleled public interference by government officials into what had previously been considered the private space of home. Pre-school childcare for example was usually a private family arrangement or the enforced domestic intimacy of billeting evacuees or workers in the home. It precipitated the rise of a range of competing discourses about motherhood. In her study on evacuation, Maggie Andrews suggests 'Governmental and voluntary agencies became increasingly entangled in a complex, shifting understanding of ideas of the family, domestic

¹⁷ Thoms, D., *War, Industry and Society: The Midlands 1939-45* (London, 1989), pp. 26-50.

labour, motherhood and the home during wartime'.¹⁸ This required a change to stereotypical ideas about women.

The 1939 accommodation census began an unprecedented degree of public interference and surveillance in what had previously been considered the private space of the home. Under the instruction of the Ministry of Health, local authorities carried out an accommodation census to ascertain the potential capacity to host evacuees.¹⁹ Andrews suggests that it even '[m]ade the intimate domestic space of the bedroom a central government concern just as munitions, the armed forces and bomb shelters were in a time of war'.²⁰ This not only applied to the reception areas for evacuees but was also the case in those places with booming war industries such as Birmingham as thousands of additional workers had to be accommodated, largely in existing accommodation. Compulsory billeting powers created a situation whereby people had to accept strangers to live in your home. Some women decided to work rather than comply with compulsory billeting.²¹

Household chores became a topic of conversation by officials as the meaning of 'home' was debated 'as they tried to define what level of domestic responsibilities constituted as grounds for the exemption of war-work'.²² They had to decide where the balance lay between women's domestic obligations and the nation's labour

¹⁸ Andrews, M., 'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women: A Domestic Response to a National Problem', *Women's History Review* (June 24, 2014), volume 24, issue 1, pp. 112-130.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 14.

²² Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012), p. 129.

needs.²³ Implementing wartime pre-school childcare provision led to disputes between the Ministries of Labour and Health regarding whether this was a legitimate area for government intervention.²⁴ Once in the workplace women could find themselves judged by industrial welfare officers who attempted to act as moral guardians, commenting on their dress, language and private lives.²⁵

Working-class women were disproportionately the target for negative criticism for being neglectful parents and having lower sexual standards during the hostilities.²⁶ Their skills at motherhood were brought under public scrutiny when their child was evacuated or attended a wartime nursery. Official and voluntary attention was paid 'into a range of areas of childcare that had once been the private concern of the family: discipline, bed-wetting, illness, the provision of clothing and shoes'.²⁷ Inner-city housing received some of the blame for these issues, but a significant amount was levelled at urban women's mothering and domestic skills.²⁸ A range of criticisms were unleashed upon mothers by a new army of childcare experts, who analysed this wartime situation through their own particular political or ideological agendas and prejudices.²⁹ Public interference continued after the hostilities as domesticity and motherhood became the focus for debate post-war and by the inclusion of social welfare and domestic science in school curricula.³⁰

²³ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 376.

²⁷ Andrews, M., 'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women: A Domestic Response to a National Problem', *Women's History Review* (June 24, 2014), volume 24, issue 1, pp. 112-130.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012), p. 376.

³⁰ Ibid.

Workforce: the passage from peace to war

With a population in excess of one million, Birmingham was England's largest provincial city by the 1930s.³¹ Following the First World War, large numbers of local married women continued to work, accounting in 1931 for 35.13 per cent of the city's workforce, compared to 30.7 per cent for England and Wales.³² Even though the city was not as badly affected by the Depression as other areas, between 1931 and 1934 approximately eight thousand people still migrated to find work elsewhere. It took the re-armament drive of the late 1930s to reverse this trend.³³ This influx of workers was not always welcomed by the locals, because in 1938 Birmingham was hit by a trade recession. Local newspapers reported complaints concerning the increase of outside labour to the city.³⁴ Nationally, by the Second World War, there were one and a half million unemployed with an estimated three to four million mainly married women classed as 'unoccupied'. This huge potential labour force had to be organised to support the national and local effort.³⁵ Because Birmingham's pre-war unemployment rate was lower than that of most other parts of the country, at the beginning of the war the shortage of manpower became a serious problem for the area sooner than in most cities.³⁶

For local industries, it was not sufficient to obtain government munition contracts or funding to build or extend factories. They required sufficient workers to staff these factories if they were to meet the production levels needed for wartime

³¹ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 9.

³² Hill, B. K., 'Women and Unemployment in Birmingham 1918-1939', *Midland History* (June 1, 2002), volume 27, issue 1, pp. 130-145.

³³ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 9.

³⁴ *Birmingham Gazette*, 'Danger of Labour Influx into Birmingham' (September 15, 1938), p. 5.

³⁵ Wilkinson, E., 'Women in War', *Picture Post* (March 9, 1940), volume 6, issue 10, p. 19.

³⁶ Taylor, A. J. P., *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), p. 413.

manufacturing. An exceptionally large number of local men were in reserved occupations in skilled industries.³⁷ As more men were conscripted into the forces, women's work was actively encouraged by government, as Figure 2.1 reveals.³⁸

The recruitment leaflet message circulated by Joseph Lucas Limited could be interpreted by people differently. Churchill's image and message offers a patriotic element but to whom is the other message aimed? Was 'mother' a term of endearment towards the older married woman no longer working or did it refer to any mother, including those with young children. However, nothing is mentioned of childcare provision. The leaflet, like most propaganda images, emphasises femininity rather than indicating the long hours, dirty heavy work and noise experienced in most wartime industries.³⁹

³⁷ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 19.

³⁸ Briggs, A., *History of Birmingham, volume II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London, 1952), pp. 200-228; Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), p. 16.

³⁹ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012).

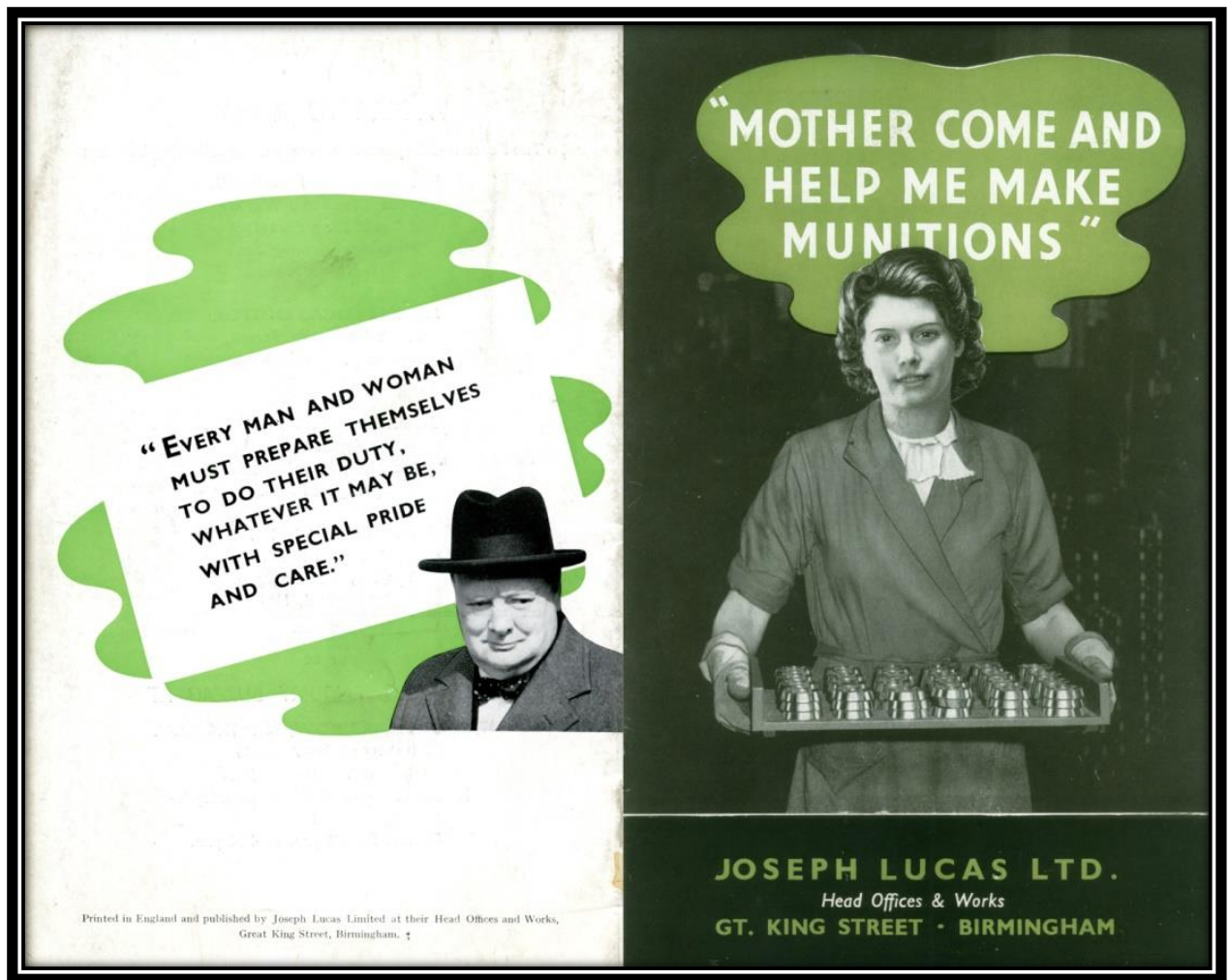


Figure 2.1: Recruitment leaflet for Joseph Lucas Limited ⁴⁰

In 1939 it was compulsory for all women between eighteen and sixty to register for war-work, whether married or single. From December 1941 it became compulsory for women to enter either the Women's Auxiliary Services (conscription) or to work in industry (direction).⁴¹ Compulsory call-up to the Women's Auxiliary Services only applied to single women and widows without children. Women who entered engineering in the First World War were volunteers, but the Second World War brought conscription and as a result more women than ever before worked in

⁴⁰ BMIHT, B-JLI-WW2Poster-War Lucas Munitions (Undated), © British Motor Industry Heritage Trust.

⁴¹ *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 'How the 'Call-up' affects the Women of Britain' (February 26, 1942), p. 5.

engineering factories.⁴² Conscription for women aroused the most negative reaction in diaries received by MO.⁴³ Even though they still needed to register; mothers with their own child under fourteen living with them were not included in either of these call-ups but were encouraged to volunteer.⁴⁴ It was one thing to decide to direct women towards work; it was quite another to translate these policies into reality.

Lack of military activity during the 'Phoney War' provided an opportunity for government and industry to focus on economics rather than fighting, by preparing for the future conflict.⁴⁵ These efforts were inhibited by shortages of materials, the loss of skilled labour to war-work, and transportation difficulties.⁴⁶ The Ministry of Supply did not issue a general call for higher output until May 1940 and it appears that unemployment continued at a disturbing level until the autumn of the same year. It was fortunate that air raids did not take place until the late summer of 1940, giving industry in the city time to reorganise without physical damage.⁴⁷

Women received an official invitation to register their occupation with their local Employment Exchange before being selected from this register and allocated jobs.⁴⁸ If they objected or were hesitant in accepting the jobs offered, they could be 'directed'

⁴² Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), p. 135.

⁴³ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 134.

⁴⁴ *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 'How the 'Call-up' affects the Women of Britain' (February 26, 1942), p. 5.

⁴⁵ The 'Phoney War' is a term used for an eight-month period at the start of the Second World War, during which there were no major military land operations on the Western Front. IWM, 'Britain's 'Phoney' start to the Second World War' [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: July 10, 2019).

⁴⁶ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 39.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 'How the 'Call-up' affects the Women of Britain' (February 26, 1942), p. 5.

under the force of law.⁴⁹ Unskilled, semi-skilled or professionally skilled, there was often little idea of matching women's skills to the work carried out. Not all women were happy or able to work. Some girls strongly resented industrial conscription and did all that they could to evade it.⁵⁰ Staff at one local labour exchange had to deal with as many as three hundred girls who arrived on the Monday to register – rather than on the previous Saturday, as invited – and caused chaos. The men employed to deal with them on the Saturday had been left idle.⁵¹ One MO report alleged that some married women directed or conscripted into industry became pregnant in order to be released again.⁵² Even though willing, the elderly or those with ill health were not always able to cope with the heavy work schedule.⁵³ Women, unaccustomed to factory life found themselves working in workshop conditions organised for men not women. Many found themselves carrying out heavy manual work with long working hours, six days a week, including shift work.⁵⁴ Working women in Birmingham were used to some aspects of these conditions, but those imported to work from other parts of the country may have found it more difficult.

Until the Emergency Works Order (EWO) of 1941 was put in place controlling the transfer of labour, there was much movement between factories by the workforce.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), pp. 34-35.

⁵⁰ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 85.

⁵¹ *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Girls, why don't you keep those dates?' (July 15, 1941), p. 1.

⁵² Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 85; Nicholson, M., *What did you do in the War, Mummy?* (Bridgend, 1995), p. 219.

⁵³ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 85.

⁵⁴ BMT (BMAG), Oral History Collection, R0712; BMT (T), Oral History Collection, OH 1384.

⁵⁵ Important war-work was considered a reserved occupation. Anyone employed in these positions was restricted from changing jobs. The Essential Work Order (EWO) was established to stabilise the excessive labour wastage of 1940. This policy reduced the freedom of the employer to dismiss and of the employee to change employment. Prior to the 1941 EWO there was a considerable amount of

If a person's work was considered unessential – for example, in the clothing industry – they could be transferred into essential work such as munitions. Smaller employers not carrying out essential work could lose all of their employees in this way, making it impossible to continue in business. Employers and employees were entitled to appeal against Ministry of Labour decisions to move staff into other employment. Employers could present their case to retain an employee before a tribunal. Similarly, women who wished to appeal against their conscription into the workplace were entitled to go before a panel. Reasons to appeal could be on religious grounds or due to domestic circumstances. A tribunal panel usually consisting of three people heard and assessed each case before deciding whether or not someone should be directed into labour. Locally, one tribunal panel member recalled how employers sometimes tried to retain staff against their will, citing an example of one middle-class family who appealed to retain a female servant employed by them for twenty years who was about to be called into industry. The outcome is unknown; however, the panel member considered that the war provided the servant with an opportunity to escape the kind of servitude situation they had been in all their lives.⁵⁶ Local men also applied for exemption from the military on medical or excessive hardship grounds, attending tribunals with the Hardships Committee. Officials were inundated with work, having received over three thousand applications from just one Birmingham area.⁵⁷

movement and fluctuation between industries as workers vied for better pay. Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), pp. 87, 94.

⁵⁶ BMT (BMAG), Oral History Collection, R0650-0652.

⁵⁷ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 81.

Even though local industry was considered to be in a better position than in other areas, demand for workers outran the supply: labour shortages in Birmingham industry were a constant problem throughout the war. During this period at least eighty thousand men and women were moved to the city from other parts of the country by the Ministries of Labour and Health in order to try and meet the demand.⁵⁸ Records are not held for the number of workers who migrated to the city voluntarily, so the number is likely to be higher. The infrastructure required to support not only the local workforce but also this influx of workers was enormous. This mass import of labour still did not fill the demand from Birmingham industry. In October 1940 the Ministry of Labour organised a two-week campaign locally to encourage women into work, with others arranged in August and September 1941, as shown in Figure 2.2. The text in the poster was carefully chosen to appeal to the patriotic and motherly nature of women, before adding a message of excited urgency: 'Enrol before it's over'. The implied subtext was that those women not enrolling for war-work will miss the party.

⁵⁸ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.



Figure 2.2: Ministry of Labour appeal for Birmingham women to join the workforce⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Birmingham Post*, 'Women of Birmingham victory is in your hands' (September 3, 1941), p. 3.

These campaigns failed to meet their targets and complaints from women filtered through to labour exchanges that there were not sufficient day nurseries to support working mothers.⁶⁰ This problem led to the establishment in Birmingham of the largest number of wartime nurseries by any local authority outside of the London County Council.⁶¹

Between 1940 and 1941 there was a particular shortage of toolmakers and setters in the new munition factories.⁶² Even though Sir William Beveridge described the shortage of skilled labour in the city as acute in October 1940, Birmingham industries along with Coventry were expected to release their skilled workers to move around the country to train others.⁶³ Prior to the EWO the Midlands tried to obtain whatever skilled labour they wanted by offering higher wages and 'poaching' became common. This resulted in wages soaring and industry experiencing a high turnover of labour.⁶⁴

In the early years of the war, Government officials continually failed to deal with the issue that a female workforce had different needs from those of men, given their particular home responsibilities. For example, who would look after their children did not appear to receive early consideration. Denise Riley suggests: 'It was as if management, whether Ministry of Supply or private industrialists, had been taken by surprise by an outlandish new work force with incomprehensible needs.'⁶⁵ This was not the case for Birmingham officials and industrialists. As a workforce shortage

⁶⁰ *Birmingham Post*, 'Birmingham women 'Go to it'' (September 13, 1941), p. 4; Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), pp. 42-43.

⁶¹ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

⁶² Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 150.

⁶³ TNA, CAB67/8/84, Cabinet Office, Man-power Survey, Sir William Beveridge (October, 1940), p. 48; Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 150.

⁶⁴ Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 100.

⁶⁵ Riley, D., *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London, 1983), p. 129.

emerged in the city earlier than in other industrial cities, it became a testing ground for central government officials to determine actual requirements before providing guidance or funding. The increase in the female workforce created a need for pre-school childcare, which needed to be met by local industrialists and officials. This left local officials and industries with no alternative but to deal with these issues themselves until government support became available.

Expected recipients of pre-school childcare

Officially by 1943 only those women under forty with heavy family responsibilities or charged with the care of a war worker could avoid mobilisation. The Ministry of Labour's interest in the worker's children was not in the child itself but in its potential obstacle to women entering the workforce.⁶⁶ Upon his appointment as Minister of Labour in May 1940, Ernest Bevin highlighted the importance of providing nursery care for mothers with pre-school children.⁶⁷ Women targeted to work were almost entirely working class and Penny Summerfield suggested that the idea that wartime industry was a 'social melting pot' was greatly exaggerated.⁶⁸ The middle- and upper-class women were encouraged to join organisations such as the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), as it was assumed that they were not dependent on their earnings.⁶⁹ Consequently, middle- and upper-class women engaged in voluntary war-work were often able to avoid conscription, a fact which generated class

⁶⁶ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 1.

⁶⁷ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), p. 67.

⁶⁸ Summerfield, P., 'Women, Work and Welfare: A Study of Child Care and Shopping in Britain in the Second World War', *Journal of Social History* (1983), volume 17, issue 2, pp. 249-269.

⁶⁹ TNA, CAB67/8/84, Cabinet Office, Man-power Survey, Sir William Beveridge (October, 1940), p. 20; TNA, LAB26/59, Ministry of Labour, The Committee on Woman Power, Memorandum concerning the Use of Woman Power in the War Effort (September 20, 1940).

resentment.⁷⁰ Voluntary work was familiar to this class of women who preferred it to waged labour; it was more fitting to their social status and could be arranged around domestic activities.⁷¹ Even though they were more likely to be carrying out voluntary work, the higher-class mothers began to experience pressure in their ability to carry out their commitments, as they lost domestic help to war-work or their nannies began to transfer to wartime nurseries.⁷² Support to run the household was important to enable them to meet their voluntary responsibilities. Despite the fact that they did not wish to work in industry themselves, they were still of the opinion that mothers of children under five only wanted nursery places to relieve themselves of their responsibilities. What this point of view failed to acknowledge was that mothers were not just the recipients of wartime pre-school childcare but had something essential which officials and industry required: their ability to work. It was, therefore, working-class childcare which the Minister of Labour requested.⁷³

Evidence from local labour exchanges validated the ministry's concern that women already on war-work were leaving their employment due to the lack of pre-school childcare.⁷⁴ How badly working mothers needed nurseries was clear to the nursery staff who often received 'the children back to the school in the morning exactly as they sent them home the night before', because the mother was too exhausted to do

⁷⁰ TNA, INF1/292, Ministry of Information, Home Intelligence Report: Man and Woman Power (May 11-18, 1942).

⁷¹ Sokoloff, S., 'How are they at home? Community, State and Servicemen's Wives in England, 1939-45', *Women's History Review* (1999), volume 8, issue 1, pp. 27-52.

⁷² TBL, Lou.Lon 350, *Nursery World*, 'Readers Letters' (August 27, 1941), p. 793.

⁷³ Summerfield, P., 'Women, Work and Welfare: A Study of Child Care and Shopping in Britain in the Second World War', *Journal of Social History* (1983), volume 17, issue 2, pp. 249-269.

⁷⁴ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', pp. 6-7.

anything other than put them to bed.⁷⁵ The labour needs of the forces and industry took priority when allocating women to war-work.⁷⁶ Until May 1941 nursery places were only open for allocation to mothers actually working in government factories or those having government contracts.⁷⁷ In reality this was a false economy as many workers were required in supportive roles, such as transport workers or staff to work in wartime nurseries if more women were to be encouraged into industry.

Birmingham Corporation Transport was unsuccessful in its early effort to recruit workers from the potential source of wives and daughters of their own employees mobilised to the Forces. Their children could only be admitted into nurseries, where vacancies could not be filled by munition workers.⁷⁸ The childcare needs of women working in transport differed from those in the munition industries, as they often required residential nurseries for their children due to their shift patterns. Without transport, workers could not travel to the industrial areas.

A report produced by MO for the Fabian Society suggests that if only the Government could provide sufficient nurseries, a substantial reservoir of female labour would become available to industry. Conversely, the MO study of people in production highlighted that this was not necessarily the case. Even though the survey did not provide a quantitative illustration of the number of women available to work if their children received care, it suggested that the outcome was not as clear-cut as many thought. Mothers in the survey were divided into three groups: those

⁷⁵ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944), p. 126.

⁷⁶ Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976), p. 402.

⁷⁷ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Scarcity of Labour, reprinted from *Woman Health Officer* (September, 1948)', 1184-1187.

⁷⁸ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 19.

who had actively taken steps towards working by placing their children on nursery waiting lists; those who had already decided against the idea of employment; and then women with no definite ideas at all.⁷⁹ Full government funding for wartime nurseries was eventually approved in May 1941, to attract more women into industry to meet the needs of the war. By agreeing to fund wartime nurseries, providing propaganda and distributing directives to local authorities, central government thought women would flock into industry. But did these officials really understand the complexities they were dealing with?

Challenges of influence, ideologies and subtle snobberies

National need gradually reversed the convention against mothers going out to work, but not always without resistance. It may not have been through deliberate intent but some local officials impeded the flow of mothers into the workplace. Although evidence to substantiate this has not been found, a Ministry of Labour report states that because local Welfare Centres were against nurseries, they were resisting the efforts of mothers to obtain information about them.⁸⁰ Some women chose not to work. When describing women's entry into various wartime roles, author Peggy Scott made them sound a little like non-complaining girl-guide types who had entered the workplace with a work-cheeriness.⁸¹ The entrance of women to the workforce was far more complex than that. In order to attract mothers of young children into the workplace there were a number of invisible barriers to be crossed. As women with children under fourteen at home were not conscripted to work, providers of pre-

⁷⁹ Mass Observation, 'The Demand for Day Nurseries', Report 1151 (March 11, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: January 21, 2017), pp. 1-5.

⁸⁰ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 13.

⁸¹ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944).

school childcare needed to convince mothers that nurseries were good for their children, otherwise they would not leave them. Cultural views were challenged, such as those by husbands, parents and society, in order to increase this workforce for the duration of the war. Central government needed to attend to a belief, which suggested that 'a woman's place was in the home'. In her study, Veronica Lloyd suggested that even at times of war, creating a reserve army of women into a workforce was not a straightforward process which simply involves switching certain stereotypical ideas about women on or off. Because ideologies have a life of their own which 'do not respond to economic exigencies' and needed to be overcome.⁸²

Except in certain industrial areas, the idea of working in factories was foreign to the beliefs of some women. A significant number of women were not prepared to cross the class divide that factory work represented.⁸³ In his history of the WVS, Charles Graves explains: 'Those who considered that they had raised themselves above the social level at which women worked in factories were cautious about volunteering for such work.'⁸⁴ Even those prepared to work in factories could be influenced and directed towards other forms of employment. One Birmingham soldier in the Burmese jungle received a letter from his wife asking for permission to take up factory work. His response was 'I wasn't having her doing that'... 'Instead she went to work part-time in a school kitchen'.⁸⁵ In early 1942 in an effort to demonstrate that working in a factory did not mean any lack of status, the former Lady Mayoress of Birmingham, Mrs Elvira Martineau, worked for one week from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm at

⁸² Lloyd, V., 'Women in Industry 1939-1951: A Case Study of Birmingham', Unpublished Masters Degree, (University of Birmingham, 1980), p. 1.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁴ Graves, C., *Women in Green: The Story of the W.V.S* (London, 1948), p. 165.

⁸⁵ Sokoloff, S., 'How are they at home? Community, State and Servicemen's Wives in England, 1939-45', *Women's History Review* (1999), volume 8, issue 1, pp. 27-52.

a lathe and continued to work part-time after that.⁸⁶ Part-time work was constantly recommended by interested parties such as factory welfare officers as being helpful to some working mothers.⁸⁷ Posters such as Figure 2.3 were intended to promote the importance of women's contribution to the war-work regardless of the number of hours they could devote. Part-time was just as relevant as full-time work and their contribution, however small, enabled them to slap Hitler in the face and help beat him into submission. But even if women wanted to work shorter hours this option was not always open to them.



Figure 2.3: Artwork for propaganda poster 'Just a good afternoon's work' ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Ex-Lady Mayoress liked week in factory' (February 20, 1942), p. 1.

⁸⁷ Riley, D., 'The Free Mothers: Pronatalism and Working Women in Industry at the End of the Last War in Britain', *History Workshop* (1981), issue 11, pp. 58-118.

⁸⁸ TNA, INF 3/400, Ministry of Information, 'Just a good afternoon's work' (artist unidentified).

The organisation of a system for part-time workers was time-consuming. Not all firms in Birmingham were amenable to part-time workers. There were some local factories where the nature of work actually made full-time employment essential.⁸⁹ Married women without dependent children at home under fourteen years could actually be conscripted from part-time to full-time work.⁹⁰

Women entering the wartime workforce meant local firms had to adjust their employment policies. Before the war some companies, such as Cadbury Brothers, had a marriage bar which had to be suspended during the Second World War but was restored post-war.⁹¹ William Newman and Sons Limited regarded the wartime employment of women on general production, as a successful experiment which was continued post-war.⁹²

Not all women available for work were employable; the chronic and neglected illness of some working-class mothers reduced the possible workforce.⁹³ Then there were those like 'Doris', in her seventies who offered her services to a small manufacturer desperate for workers near Summer Lane. Doris was taken on, but it quickly became apparent that she could not work. At the end of the morning, she was asked not to return and given ten shillings. Delighted at the outcome she presented herself again two days later at the same factory hoping – in vain – for the same result.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Plenty of part-time jobs for women' (February 11, 1942), p. 2.

⁹⁰ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 151.

⁹¹ Smith, H. L., 'The Womanpower Problem in Britain during the Second World War', *The Historical Journal* (1984), volume 27, issue 4, pp. 925-945.

⁹² William Newman and Sons Limited, *The Story of William Newman and Sons Limited (Established 1750)* (London, 1950), p. 22.

⁹³ Wilkinson, E., 'Women in War', *Picture Post* (March 9, 1940), volume 6, issue 10, p. 19.

⁹⁴ Freeman, G., *The Houses Behind* (London, 1947), p. 109.

Why some Birmingham mothers chose to work

Although not conscripted, there were many reasons why mothers chose to join the local workforce. For some it was merely a rush of patriotism or an opportunity to earn more money, while for others it was a financial necessity. Information was not collected by government officials to establish why mothers entered factories and placed their children in day nurseries. Statistics analysed by Birmingham Public Health Department showed that of the children attending their eighty wartime nurseries at the end of 1944, thirty-seven per cent had fathers in the Armed Forces.⁹⁵ Pay in the forces was much lower than men could earn in local wartime industry and many women found it necessary to work to supplement their husband's income.⁹⁶ This anomaly was recognised by at least one local employer, Dunlop, who paid their male employees an *ex gratia* grant during the period of their whole-time active service. Married men received the difference between his remuneration before the war, his service pay and allowances plus 10 shillings per week. Unmarried men received a grant equal to one third of the difference estimated for married men.⁹⁷

Some mothers looked upon working during the war as an opportunity for improvement. MO collected evidence of mothers of young children who wanted to work. They accepted that there could be adequate substitutes for themselves in childcare while they worked, often seeing the situation not in terms of whether nursery or any other type of care was good for their child, but in terms of the benefit

⁹⁵ Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976), p. 420 notes.

⁹⁶ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 85.

⁹⁷ Storrs, R. S. and Beharrell, J. G., *Dunlop in War and Peace* (London, 1946), p. 18.

their earnings would bring the child not only in the present but also the future.⁹⁸ Fear of unemployment and war damage was a living reality for some of the labour force. One Birmingham woman, when asked why her sister, a mother of three children and expecting her fourth, was working a night shift responded: 'We was out of work for three years before the war, then we was blitzed, and it was a bit awkward.'⁹⁹ Tom Harrison, co-founder of MO, suggested that the habit of working was also linked to the need to work financially and the fear of not having a job.¹⁰⁰

Working could merely have been considered the 'lesser of two evils' by some women. For others the prospect of compulsory work produced a new crop of landladies in billeting areas. Having two war workers as lodgers procured exemption for their landladies.¹⁰¹ From January 1941 the city had compulsory billeting powers and an unpleasant situation, accepting strangers into your home, might be avoided by going out to work.¹⁰² As a landlady she would have received twenty-five shillings per week full board for each billet.¹⁰³

Having effectively two jobs – both wartime work and looking after a family – had some unexpected benefits which the mothers soon discovered and used to their advantage. Once it became clear that their child could receive its food at the nursery and the mother her mid-day meal at the factory, without any loss to their ordinary

⁹⁸ Summerfield, P., 'Women, Work and Welfare: A Study of Child Care and Shopping in Britain in the Second World War', *Journal of Social History* (1983), volume 17, issue 2, pp. 249-269.

⁹⁹ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944), p. 126.

¹⁰⁰ Harrison, T., *Living through the Blitz* (London, 1975), p. 303.

¹⁰¹ TNA, INF1/292, Ministry of Information, Home Intelligence Report: Man and Woman Power.

¹⁰² TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 14.

¹⁰³ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 142.

rations, proved a strong factor in the effective demand for nurseries, and swelled the waiting lists.¹⁰⁴

Night shifts brought higher wages but an increased risk due to raids which discouraged some women.¹⁰⁵ Nine twenty-four-hour nurseries were also opened from Monday to Friday. However, even when residential places were available, mothers did not always take advantage of them. It was frequently found that 'children are left to sleep in Air Raid Shelters all night while the mothers are on night duty at the factories'.¹⁰⁶ Some women wanted to work this shift because the pay was better and it was easier for them to deal with home issues such as housework and shopping.¹⁰⁷ Others such as this Birmingham mother were not so keen:

They say we've got to go on nights...I wouldn't mind it, but I wouldn't volunteer because of our Babs. I could manage, because her auntie would look after her, but I wouldn't volunteer like. My chap, he says if I go on nights, I can pack it in. He was against me coming here in the first place.¹⁰⁸

Mothers with children under fourteen were not compelled to work, therefore this woman was probably not expected to work a night shift, however comments like these in the workplace could have a discouraging effect on other workers who might expect special benefits themselves.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Report of Dr G I Brodie (February 26, 1941).

¹⁰⁷ Freeman, G., *The Houses Behind* (London, 1947), pp. 51-52.

¹⁰⁸ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 33.

Many women night workers did not sleep during the day-time.¹⁰⁹ Generally the wartime arrangement was to work a week or fortnight on the night shift followed by the same period 'on days'.¹¹⁰ But some women elected to do permanent night-work. Twelve-hour shifts were frequent but it was only for five nights as opposed to six days a week. Women could be home by eight in the morning when they began their housework but did not sleep much. Author Gwendoline Freeman mentions how Bessie Clive continued to work in this way for years and her health deteriorated. 'But what can you do?' she would say, 'The kids must be fed.'¹¹¹ An industrial shortfall still had to be met and there were differing approaches to encourage women into the workforce.

Recruitment drives and propaganda

From the point of view of morale amongst fathers serving in the forces and public opinion generally, it was felt undesirable for there to be any appearance of direct pressure on Birmingham women with children under fourteen to enter the workforce. They were not even called to the local Labour Exchange for interview.¹¹² Propaganda, recruitment drives, and gentle peer pressure were used to try to increase recruitment into local industry. Nationally, to try to alleviate female anxieties about industrial labour, and to increase recruitment and morale in factories, films were produced such as *Millions Like Us*. It was filmed at the Castle Bromwich factory

¹⁰⁹ Freeman, G., *The Houses Behind* (London, 1947), pp. 51-52; Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 14.

¹¹⁰ The ban on the employment of women on the night shift did not take place until after 1942. Hornby, W., *History of the Second World War: Factories and Plant* (London, 1958), p. 248.

¹¹¹ Freeman, G., *The Houses Behind* (London, 1947), pp. 51-52.

¹¹² TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 5.

in 1943 and was screened nationally in cinemas.¹¹³ Birmingham working women took part in local recruitment drives, travelling on lorries displaying the types of items produced by individual manufacturers. These lorries looked like something that would feature in a carnival and made the work in a wartime factory look like fun. The women had probably got the day off work just for standing on the float.

Sometimes individuals were borrowed for short periods from factories by the Ministry of Information to aid recruitment. Mrs Robinson was originally asked to tour the outlying districts of Birmingham in a recruitment van for one week; this was eventually extended to six weeks. This mother normally worked in a factory from 8 am to 5 pm, dropping her two-year-old daughter at a day nursery on her way. While she took part in the recruitment drive an average of ninety-three workers per week were recruited for local factories.¹¹⁴

Mrs Pugh, a local shop steward with considerable influence in her factory, obtained permission from a cinema manager for herself and ten fellow women workers to appeal to the audience to join them in their factory to work. In caps and overalls these women went on stage while Mrs Pugh spoke. Working-class women in the audience could relate to her, as she was one of them. The appeal must have been successful as she was asked to make another one in Warwick.¹¹⁵ For two weeks Mrs Pugh also made door-to-door appeals for factory recruits in a joint campaign promoted by the Ministries of Labour, Supply, Aircraft Production and Information.

¹¹³ Trudgen Dawson, S., 'Busy and Bored: The Politics of Work and Leisure for Women Workers in the Second World War; British Government Hostels', *Twentieth Century British History* (2010), volume 21, issue 1, pp. 29-49.

¹¹⁴ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944), p. 110.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

She felt that husbands were the industrialists' and officials' biggest drawback in getting women into industry. The men considered the income tax paid would not make it worthwhile for them both to work, or suggested that their wives were needed at home to look after the house. Speaking of his wife, one man thought: 'She could wait till she was called up'; the young girls could go.¹¹⁶

Some factories resorted to their own recruitment drives using childcare as an incentive even though any applications could be directed to local Labour Exchanges, as illustrated in Figure 2.4. There was obviously collaboration between local officials and the factory as the Labour Exchange did not have any control over the kind of work women with young children carried out. Their exclusion from the National Service Orders and the fact that they fell outside the Control of Employment Order meant that their services could be offered to any employer without reference to the Ministry of Labour.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

¹¹⁷ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

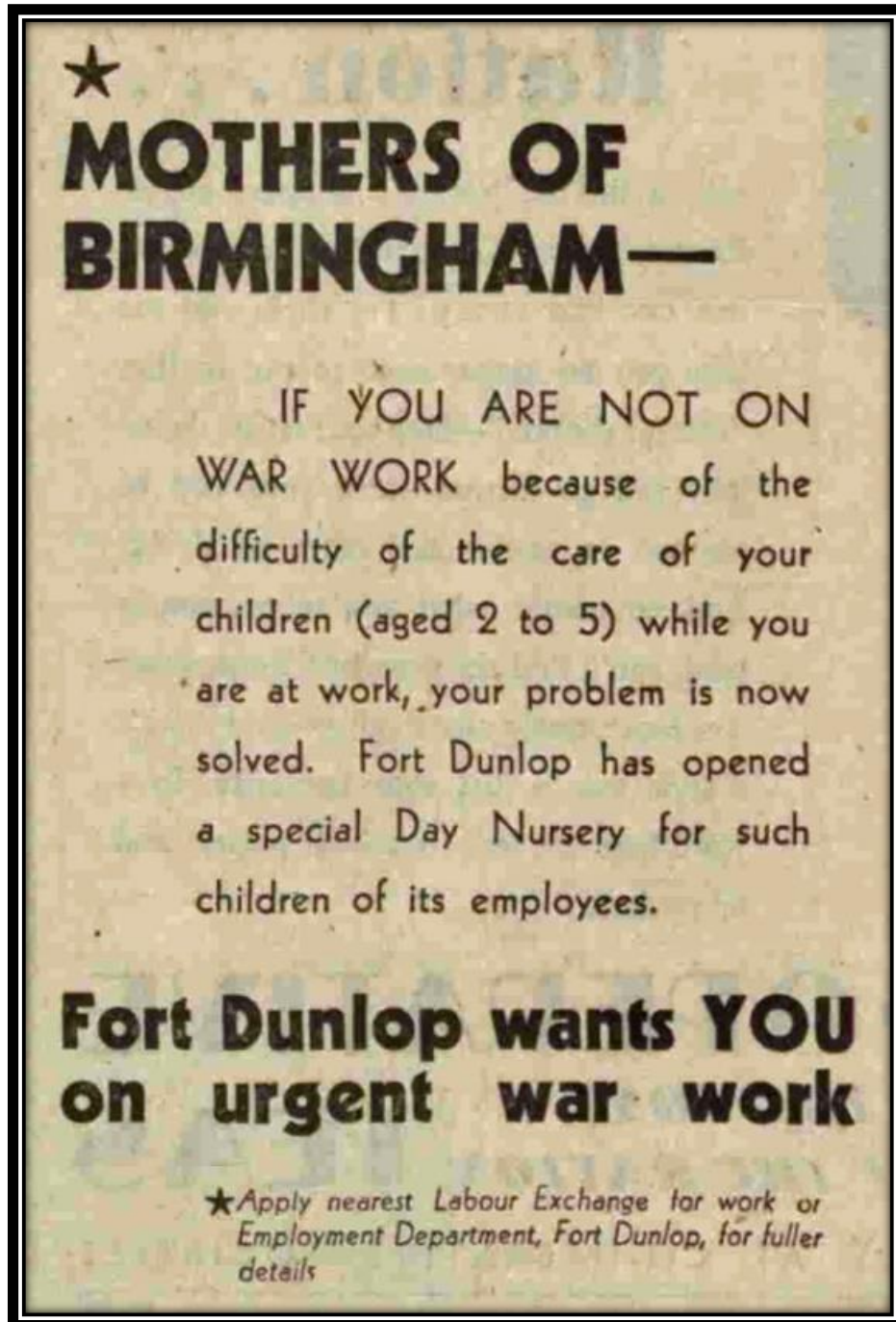


Figure 2.4: Fort Dunlop recruitment drive ¹¹⁸

Official propaganda undoubtedly helped to undermine the conventional attitudes towards mothers working but the financial benefits mentioned earlier were probably

¹¹⁸ *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Mothers of Birmingham' (November 25, 1941), p. 2.

what actually moved housewives into the factories.¹¹⁹ Taken as part of the Ministry of Information official wartime collection, the images below (Figures 2.5 and 2.6) were meant to reassure people that nurseries were safe places to leave children.



Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6: Flint Green Road Nursery, Acocks Green, Birmingham¹²⁰

Mothers, children and staff appear to be clean, happy and contented; however, wartime reality often painted a very different picture, as this research reveals. These are clearly posed photographs taken in a prosperous area, Acocks Green, where photogenic mothers and children were chosen, raising suspicions of whether the women were actually working in factories and were really mothers.

Workforce migration to Birmingham

The workforce shortfall was made up by importing single women from Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the North-east.¹²¹ In February 1941, Birmingham expected an

¹¹⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 14.

¹²⁰ IWM, D 9050 and D 9066, *Ministry of Information Second World War Collection*, 'Nursery for working mothers: The work of Flint Green Road Nursery, Birmingham', 1942 [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: August 31, 2017), © IWM D 9050 and D 9066.

importation of thirty thousand workers arriving at a rate of sixty to five hundred per week.¹²² Convoys of girls came by train under the charge of a female guide. They were met by reception officers employed to see them comfortably settled.¹²³ Some girls were not suited to factory life and required too much time and attention. After trying to settle two London girls into the workplace, one frustrated personnel manager contacted the Women's Supervisor of Vacancies, suggesting that in future they send them 'servant girls, mill girls and Irish girls but not these "better girls", our factory can't take them'.¹²⁴ Discrepancies often arose between the quantities of workers transported to the city compared with those actually arriving at the factory to work. One Birmingham factory check established that from the twenty-seven women allocated to them, there was wastage of eleven; three had never turned up, three had gone without permission, two had gone off sick, one had applied for release, one was unsuitable, and another was transferred to staff.¹²⁵ The stories of high wages in the city attracted some women to move to the area but not all industries paid these rates. A woman and her stepdaughter from Sevenoaks, Kent, closed their home and moved to Birmingham to work but were disappointed to find the rate of pay lower than expected. In reality, she was unable to pay local lodgings and keep her permanent home together on the money she earned until the end of the hostilities. Disillusioned, she was allowed to return home.¹²⁶ Many migrants liked the Midlands, stayed and eventually married but some were homesick and fled back home. Officials

¹²¹ Sokoloff, S., 'How are they at home? Community, State and Servicemen's Wives in England, 1939-45', *Women's History Review* (1999), volume 8, issue 1, pp. 27-52.

¹²² TNA, HLG7/410, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Temporary Hostels, Birmingham (1941).

¹²³ Calder, A., *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (London, 1971), p. 333.

¹²⁴ Mass Observation, *Diary of Personnel Manager*, Birmingham (Diary: 5100) (1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: February 24, 2015) (February 2, 1942).

¹²⁵ Ibid. (February 11, 1942).

¹²⁶ Ibid. (February 18, 1942).

considered it would be pointless forcing them to return to Birmingham to work.¹²⁷

This new workforce brought with them problems of their own, some using the war as an opportunity to avoid difficult situations at home, while others only added extra pressure to the shortage of accommodation and childcare facilities. Large numbers of unmarried mothers arriving for munitions work in Birmingham presented a particularly difficult problem in terms of care and accommodation.¹²⁸ The single largest group to be employed at TI were Irish women who came to work in Birmingham voluntarily.¹²⁹ All of the Irish girls were supposed to have medical certificates indicating their fitness to work but sometimes relevant papers did not arrive. One landlady called in to see the welfare officer at TI, and it appeared that one of the girls who had just arrived was eight months pregnant and the landlady was afraid the child would be born on the doorstep.¹³⁰ Another had left her baby at home in Ireland to work in Birmingham and after six months decided to return to see it. She explained how it was not considered acceptable in Ireland for married women to work but it was 'all right here, nobody knows', while a third Irish mother arrived to work in the Midlands bringing her baby.¹³¹ The MO investigator thought: 'One of the most unfortunate aspects of private billeting is that it throws young and irresponsible girls entirely on their own resources with no supervision or guidance.'¹³² Maisie aged twenty-two arrived at TI at the end of July and shared a billet with three other Irish girls. She liked to have what she described as a 'good time'. By the end of August

¹²⁷ Calder, A., *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (London, 1971), p. 333.

¹²⁸ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Correspondence from Dr E Cassie to Dr Taylor, Ministry of Health, Whitehall (November 24, 1941).

¹²⁹ Sheridan, D., *Wartime Women: A Mass-Observation Anthology, 1937-45* (London, 2009), p. 161.

¹³⁰ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 87.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150; Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 76.

¹³² Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 145a.

there was a rumour at the factory that she was already expecting a baby. If true, it is probable she arrived in that condition but her relaxed behaviour around men since her arrival due to lack of parental supervision had been causing concern at TI.¹³³

The problem of unmarried mothers coming to work in the city was not restricted to the Irish, and numbers were significant enough for Dr Ethel Cassie, Birmingham Senior Assistant Medical Officer of Health, to mention in correspondence to the Ministry of Health.¹³⁴

Migrants to the city were not always responsible for the situations in which they found themselves while working in Birmingham. Some billeting landladies took two or even three workers into their home. Considerable friction was often caused by a girl finding she was 'expected to spend her whole private life, and often share a bed, with an incompatible stranger'.¹³⁵ Pre-war prejudices between Irish workers and the locals do not appear to have been dissolved by any wartime sense of social solidarity. Unlike the friendly welcome shown in publicity images (Figure 2.7), local housewives had to be pressed to provide billets for female Irish labour.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Correspondence from Dr Cassie to Dr D Taylor, Ministry of Health, Whitehall (November 24, 1941).

¹³⁵ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 142.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 22, 140.



Figure 2.7: Woman welcomed to her billet¹³⁷

Just having an unusual accent led some women to fall victim to discrimination on a number of levels. The food served by a landlady to one mother she thought to be Irish and accompanied by her pre-school child was inedible. Her landlady reported her to the billeting officer as having 'dirty habits', using bad language and said her baby was 'lousy'. Taking the landlady's side, the billeting officer refused three requests to give the mother an opportunity to share her perspective, saying 'she was like all the Irish'. When examined by the factory nurse, this woman was found to be

¹³⁷ IWM, D 3464, Ministry of Information Second World War Collection [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: April 5, 2017), © IWM D 3464.

clean without any trace of lice. Her baby had been examined upon entry into the nursery where no mention had been made of lice or uncleanness. Alternative accommodation was arranged by the factory's own billeting officer. Police checks on aliens employed at the factory a week later disclosed the woman was not Irish after all. Her husband was an Englishman from Durham.¹³⁸ Conversely, landlords could become too friendly: the husband of one Irish girl's digs made sexual propositions which caused her to move.¹³⁹ Similarly to severely blitzed cities, Birmingham suffered a number of scabies outbreaks which locals attributed to workers from Eire. Local officials reported that the standard of hygiene of Irish migrants was low, leaving them vulnerable to contract the 'malady' while living in this country.¹⁴⁰ Religion possibly played a part as it did in other regions; Blackburn, for example, considered opening a Roman Catholic hostel.¹⁴¹ Birmingham workers such as Hilda were sometimes outnumbered in the workplace by those imported to the city; she recalls working in an all-women workshop where she was the only local amongst twenty girls.¹⁴² Conversely, there was a distinct prejudice amongst the Irish women against Birmingham people generally – the local people being considered ignorant and untrustworthy.¹⁴³ It was not only the Irish who were not welcomed by the local people. Home Intelligence reports record how Scottish workers experienced similar problems. In the Shirley district of Birmingham billeting was considered satisfactory

¹³⁸ Mass Observation, *Diary of Personnel Manager*, Birmingham (Diary: 5100) (1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: February 24, 2015) (February 4, 5, 6, and 12, 1942).

¹³⁹ Chinn, C., *Birmingham Irish: Making our Mark* (Birmingham, 2003), p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, LAB26/9, Ministry of Labour, Arrangements for the Reception and Accommodation of Workers Travelling to this Country from Eire, Correspondence Ministry of Labour regional office, Birmingham (November 16, 1942).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Correspondence Ministry of Labour regional office, Manchester (August 29, 1941).

¹⁴² BMT (BMAG), Oral History Collection, R0712.

¹⁴³ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), pp. 22, 140.

while in Erdington, Scotswomen had a bad reputation. The landladies would not voluntarily accept Scots; 'they are dirty'... 'they drink' and 'they stay out late'. On the other hand the girls complained of their digs being dirty, and too expensive. Local factories welcomed the Scots workers but were frustrated when girls frequently arrived in the city pregnant and unable to work.¹⁴⁴ Because locals were not always keen to welcome workers into their homes, officials felt it would sometimes be easier to find billets for homeless people on humanitarian grounds than it was to find 'lodgings' for imported workers.¹⁴⁵

Economic value of working mothers compared with staffing nurseries

Wartime nurseries consumed as much if not more labour than they freed.¹⁴⁶ This conjecture fails to consider that private childminding as an alternative to nursery life would often be carried out 'by unsuitable people in unhealthy surroundings beyond any possibility of control'.¹⁴⁷ An investigation was carried out in Birmingham in 1945 regarding the economic value of working mothers as compared with staffing nurseries.¹⁴⁸ Local policy was that no more than two children from any one family should be accepted in wartime nurseries. The general feeling was that a mother with three children should not be encouraged to work outside the home, and that little would be gained in respect of nursery costs versus industrial production.¹⁴⁹ How

¹⁴⁴ TNA, INF1/292, Ministry of Information, Home Intelligence Report: Man and Woman Power, Scotswomen go south to war-work (July 9, 1942).

¹⁴⁵ TNA, HLG7/410, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Temporary Hostels, Birmingham (1941).

¹⁴⁶ Author unidentified, 'Day Nurseries and Industry', *The British Medical Journal* (May 10, 1947), volume 1, issue 4505, pp. 644-645.

¹⁴⁷ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Scarcity of Labour, reprinted from *Woman Health Officer* (September, 1948)', 1184-1187.

¹⁴⁸ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries',

strictly this was enforced is not clear as evidence exists of at least one mother sending three children. The mother of five placed three in a day nursery and the other two attended school while she worked in a factory. Following care difficulties with her five-year-old, an arrangement was made for the nursery to take her after school hours. It was surprising that a woman with five young children even considered working but public opinion in Birmingham was on her side. Any possibility of the government taking steps to actually prohibit people with young children from working was highly unlikely. Arguably local mothers who placed their children in nurseries would have worked even if these facilities did not exist as informal childminding had been taking place in the area for years. Nurseries may simply have displaced paid minding due to their cheapness. Some minders may have abused children in their care: local nursery teachers remembered one young boy who came to them in a terrified condition. His minder had been in the habit of putting him in the coal cellar.¹⁵⁰ Conversely, family minders were not always perfect. One Birmingham mother of a three-year-old daughter stated: 'Er does what 'er likes – 'er won't go to bed till 'er thinks 'er will. 'er gets that spoiled by 'er auntie I can't do nothing with 'er'.¹⁵¹ Whether using an informal minder or a family minder neither option offer a perfect solution.

p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944), pp. 112,127.

¹⁵¹ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 26.

Morale, productive output and absenteeism

Men did not always welcome women into the factories. Fearing their wages would be undercut, they sometimes sought to exclude the cheaper female workers.¹⁵²

Dilution agreements were reached between employers' organisations and unions to protect male workers from the dangers of undercutting.¹⁵³ Without these agreements any changes to male or female pay structures would have put the jobs of men returning from the forces at risk. Women carrying out the same work as men did not receive the same remuneration. The lack of friendliness from men towards women was not always due to financial reasons. Some men were afraid that if there were sufficient numbers of women in the workplace, then they themselves would be mobilised into the forces. A more serious expression of prejudice was experienced by one female MO investigator during her short time working on a turning lathe at TI. As the male night staff went off duty, 'they would deliberately dismantle and loosen the lathe in such a way that it would take up to an hour to adjust it into working order again' in the morning. A more serious outcome could have been injury if loose parts had come off. Men on the day shift were not impressed with their behaviour, stating: 'Ay (*sic*), it's sabotage, that's what it is' and 'They'd shoot 'em for it, if it was in some countries'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), pp. 8-9.

¹⁵³ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), p. 153.

¹⁵⁴ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 18.

Prior to the EWO any industries employing large numbers of women were concerned about potential dislocation and chaos as women pursued the better-paid jobs.¹⁵⁵ This was probably experienced in Birmingham industries where prior to the war women already constituted a large proportion of their workforce. Without the official restrictions experienced by other workers, mothers had the freedom to change employment as and when they wished. David Thoms suggested: 'Domestic factors represented the largest single cause of movement among women.'¹⁵⁶ Many women were already paid higher wages than in peacetime, usually due to working longer hours.¹⁵⁷ Earnings in Midlands shadow factories were among the highest in the country, often reaching double the basic time rates. Shadow factories could pay this because of the great demand for aircraft.¹⁵⁸ War worker Christine Haig recalls that girls at Castle Bromwich were paid seven pounds a week and the men received fourteen pounds.¹⁵⁹ Wage comparisons are beyond the scope of this study but the following pay rates indicate the variations between industries. For a forty-seven-hour week in November 1942, men received sixty-six shillings, while women received fifty shillings and eight pence (which increased to fifty-nine shillings between the MO investigation at TI and the report being published). In 1942 a female TI employee reported that girls at Birmingham cycle manufacturers Hercules were earning seven pounds a week. Compared with pay offered in Ireland at that time: thirty shillings for girls in shirt factories or four pounds for a male head mechanic who could allegedly

¹⁵⁵ Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), p. 136.

¹⁵⁶ Thoms, D., *War, Industry and Society, the Midlands, 1939-45*, (London, 1989), pp. 64-65.

¹⁵⁷ Trudgen Dawson, S., 'Busy and Bored: The Politics of Work and Leisure for Women Workers in the Second World War; British Government Hostels', *Twentieth Century British History* (2010), volume 21, issue 1, pp. 29-49.

¹⁵⁸ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 46.

¹⁵⁹ BMT (TSM), Oral History Collection, OH 1384. There were twenty shillings to the pound, and twelve pence to the shilling.

earn ten pounds in Birmingham, it is easy to understand the desire to work in the city.¹⁶⁰

An increasing proportion of married women were entering war industry, but in some cases found their home duties and ties too difficult.¹⁶¹ There was a higher absenteeism rate among women than men which was heavily weighted by the proportion of married women working in the factory. However, many women managed to work against all the odds. As well as sickness they had fluctuating priorities between the factory, home and children to contend with.¹⁶² There was a lack of stability in the female workforce at TI among the Irish girls taken on before August 1942 where 'the average duration of employment was three months'.¹⁶³ Figures were not much better for local women, as of the original first twenty-one Birmingham women employed at TI, only eight remained at the time of the MO investigation. The factory tried to be as flexible as possible in employing married women. Those working in the offices were given time off to do their shopping, but it is not clear if the same consideration was given to all women working in the factory.¹⁶⁴ Working mothers were trying to maintain a family home-life during wartime air-raids, shortages and uncertainties. Even workers badly affected by bombing did not lose more than one week from work while they found alternative accommodation for their families.¹⁶⁵ Some support systems provided by local officials were in place

¹⁶⁰ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), pp. 1, 20, 42.

¹⁶¹ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 85.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁶³ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 24.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁵ Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976), p. 341.

to help families in such situations but for women to turn the situation around so quickly was an achievement. TI provided temporary accommodation in a factory hostel which was reserved for employees affected by air raids; whether other local employers had similar facilities is not clear.¹⁶⁶ An article by Jones, Woolven *et al* discusses an investigation completed on behalf of the Ministry of Home Security into the impact of air raids on morale and productive output by Professors John Desmond Bernal and Solly Zuckerman which compared the effects of raids on Birmingham and Hull. Bernal and Zuckerman found the local workforce had 'an inner buoyancy... while Hull was... torpid and apathetic'. Because of Birmingham's size, they considered production in the city fell by less than five per cent. Stable employment and high wages deterred local people from widespread evacuation or 'trekking' at night.¹⁶⁷ When the author's grandparents wanted respite from the raids, they trekked with their two teenage daughters to stay with relatives in Warwick. They could only do this at weekends because they could not afford to lose their wages by going mid-week.¹⁶⁸ Even though 10,000 people left Birmingham every month as a result of raids, they were soon replaced by workers attracted by the ready availability of well-paid jobs. Bernal and Zuckerman did not find 'any evidence of panic' in either town, although the situation in Hull was obscured by 'trekking'. They interpreted this not as a sign of low morale but as a response to the destructiveness of air raids. The report concluded that morale in Birmingham was reinforced by economic prosperity: 'a big

¹⁶⁶ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012), p. 140.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, E., *et al.*, 'Civilian Morale during the Second World War: Responses to Air Raids Re-examined', *Social History of Medicine* (2004), volume 17, issue 3, pp. 463-479. 'Trekking' was a wartime term used when residents travelled out of the city in the evening, returning again in the morning. Postan, M. M., *History of the Second World War: British War Production* (London, 1975), p. 271.

¹⁶⁸ *Wood Interviews*, Edna Edwards (July 20, 2014).

town was more resilient under bombing than a small town, since it has a larger capacity for absorbing within itself a displaced population'.¹⁶⁹

The Second World War was once seen as a force for bringing lasting changes to women's lives, but Summerfield suggests that the wartime changes to working women's lives were only a temporary adjustment to the emergency and in 1945, pre-war patterns returned.¹⁷⁰ Conversely Louise Tilly and Joan Scott suggest that although in terms of women's employment the war was not the watershed it appeared to be to some, it did hasten changes in the economy, demography and family already underway by 1939.¹⁷¹ For instance, the standard of life was influenced by the money women had been earning during the war.¹⁷² Their exposure to earnings led married women to redefine their family priorities. Public attitudes regarding women's ability to work changed.¹⁷³

Conclusion

This study explores to what extent and how pre-school childcare provision in Birmingham was a result of the immediate demands of war. The city's diverse manufacturing base was well recognised at times of war when expertise and manpower could be transferred with relative ease to the manufacture of munitions. Local women had a tradition of working out of the home. Even if they had taken a break from employment due to marriage or to raise their family, they still had an

¹⁶⁹ Jones, E., *et al.*, 'Civilian Morale during the Second World War: Responses to Air Raids Re-examined', *Social History of Medicine* (2004), volume 17, issue 3, pp. 463-479.

¹⁷⁰ Wightman, C., *More than Munitions: Women, Work and the Engineering Industries, 1900-1950* (London, 1999), p. 133.

¹⁷¹ Tilly, L. and Scott, J. W., *Women, Work, and Family* (London, 1989), pp. 214-215.

¹⁷² TNA, RG23/50, Central Office of Information, Thomas, G., 'The Social Survey: Women at Work' (June, 1944), p. 4.

¹⁷³ Tilly, L. and Scott, J. W., *Women, Work, and Family* (London, 1989), pp. 214-215.

understanding of what work was. Female conscription into employment was intended to be equal for all classes but in reality, this was not the case. Prejudices against factory work, combined with suspicions that women of the 'leisured classes' were sheltering behind voluntary roles, ensured that it was the working classes who were more likely to be carrying out this work. High local wages encouraged migration to the city but this did not entirely alleviate the manpower shortages. Migrants often impacted on the already depleted services such as billeting and childcare. Even though industry in Birmingham was in a better position than in most industrial cities in terms of workforce, the demand for manpower always outran supply. Conscription did not apply to those women with children under fourteen still living with them. This was a significant pool of workers to call upon, but a female workforce had different needs from those of men – for example, pre-school childcare. Structures were already in place for children of school age but the main obstacle between women with pre-school children joining the workforce was the lack of childcare. The pre-school child therefore became an industrial problem. Childcare issues were not unique to the Second World War, but they were intensified by the economic and social conditions of the period. High wages encouraged local mothers of pre-school children into work; if industry was to be supplied with workers and the war was to be won, care was required for the pre-school child on an extensive scale. How Birmingham officials approached and met this complex challenge is explored in Chapter 4. As a prelude to that enquiry, Chapter 3 explores and establishes the framework that existed for pre-school childcare in Birmingham before the Second World War, enabling the local government to create its extensive wartime provision and to foster an environment for experimentation. It attempts to address the second

key question, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision before the war, and what constraints affected its development?

CHAPTER 3: PRE-SCHOOL CHILDCARE IN BIRMINGHAM BEFORE 1939

Introduction

Crucially, it was the creation of early pre-school childcare in Birmingham which established the framework on which Second World War provision was built and explains why the city became a centre for experimentation in nursery education during the hostilities. Pre-school childcare did not just emerge during the Second World War. For decades, pioneering work had taken place in Birmingham and a distinctive pre-school childcare movement evolved and was in place. Philanthropic effort supported by a progressive local government open to experimentation, introduced new schemes, including advanced systems in pre-school education, which attracted national interest. Schemes included a Free Kindergarten movement for the children of the working classes established by Julia Lloyd, and William T Benslyn's architectural experiments in nursery schools, led the city to become a respected provider of pre-school education. Early experimentation in pre-school education enticed experts to the city, including child psychologist Dr William Blatz, during the Second World War. By 1939, a limited number of nurseries already existed in the city but they were inadequate to meet wartime needs. Nevertheless, Birmingham managed to build a reputation as an accomplished provider of pre-school childcare, which enabled it to influence local and national wartime provision. This chapter investigates the development of pre-school childcare from the late nineteenth century up to the Second World War and provides the context within which Birmingham wartime provision was built. It explores the need and demand for

pre-school education in Birmingham, and the limitations which affected this provision, while considering whether the city was a potentially fertile environment to provide pre-school childcare before the Second World War. This helps to explain why and how Birmingham was able to instigate an innovative programme of pre-school childcare in the 1940s.

Historically, education and childcare for all age groups evolved due to the foresight of individuals who had a vision of what childhood might be. Educational histories relating to the pre-school child have mainly focused on the ideas of the great educators or psychologists with very little consideration given to the historical development of provision for this age group.¹ The introduction has explored the literature relevant to the development of pre-school childcare before the Second World War; however, it does not look at what was happening in Birmingham. It is crucial to understand what pre-school childcare existed before the hostilities in order to understand the nature and extent of wartime development.

To answer the second key question, this chapter considers to what extent was Birmingham innovative in its pre-school childcare provision before the war, and what constraints affected its development. In particular, it explores Birmingham pre-school childcare before 1939 to establish its relevance for the introduction of the extensive wartime provision and local experimental initiatives. Two questions interrogate the primary source material: firstly, why was pre-school childcare becoming more important nationally and secondly, how and in what ways was Birmingham experimenting with this provision? It answers these questions by covering three

¹ Rusk, R. R., *A History of Infant Education* (London, 1933); Isaacs, S., *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years* (London, 1960).

themes. The first explores changes, which occurred industrially, socially and administratively during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to create an environment that necessitated pre-school childcare or education. The second examines the provision of pre-school childcare in Birmingham during the First World War to consider whether it was a pertinent model for the next war. The final theme considers the interwar period to establish what pre-school childcare was available to promote care for the children of working mothers in Birmingham as the Second World War approached.

Primary sources, including those of the central and local government departments, the Selly Oak Nursery School and The Nursery School Association, provide the focus for this research.² Early publications such as those by Margaret McMillan and Grace Owen, designed as 'instruction' manuals to describe every aspect of how to run nursery schools, are useful for the thought processes at the time.³

Pre-school childcare is a broad term, in this case covering kindergartens, nursery education in schools or classes, day nurseries and childminding (Table 3.1).

² TNA, MH55/1667, Ministry of Health; MUN4/4546, Ministry of Munitions; LAB2/5017, Ministry of Labour; ED66/30, ED69/90, ED102/4, Board of Education; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/25-28, 1914-1918, L./48/31; 306321, Selly Oak Nursery School; LSE, BAECE 13, The Nursery School Association .

³ McMillan, M., *The Nursery School* (London, 1919); Owen, G. (ed.), *Nursery School Education* (London, 1923).

Type of facility	Description
Kindergartens	A mid-nineteenth-century establishment for children below the age of compulsory education. Mostly aimed at middle-class children although there were a few Free Kindergartens usually provided by local philanthropic effort. Local children 3-6 years.
Nursery School	Whole schools dedicated to the pre-school education of children 2-5 years, under the control of the local education authority.
Nursery Class	Classes within a primary school and dedicated to the pre-school education of children 2-5 years, again under the management of the local education authority.
Aided Nursery Schools	Those controlled by a voluntary organisation were sometimes eligible for an annual grant from the Education Department from 1918, via their local education authority. Children 2-5 years.
Day Nursery	Establishments managed by local public health authorities providing daily care rather than education for pre-school children. Used mainly by mothers of illegitimate babies while they worked or to support mothers during illness.
Private childminding	A private arrangement made by mothers. Usually leaving their children in the care of relatives, neighbours or friends.

Table 3.1: Pre-school childcare provision (19th and 20th century) ⁴

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century

The roots of pre-school education emerged not from Parliament but from philanthropy and innovative municipal corporations such as Birmingham. Local government experimented with the education of the pre-school child. The

⁴ Compiled by the author with data taken from Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 176-203; TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Memorandum to Inspectors N.S. No. 58(E) (February 18, 1942).

groundwork carried out during this period was fundamental to the creation of the pre-school childcare provided during the Second World War. From its inception, any growth in nurseries reflected the social and economic pressures of the time. The early creativity and experimentation in trying to meet this need built a reputation and tradition of pre-school childcare in Birmingham within which Dr William Blatz's Second World War scheme fitted (Chapters 5 and 6).

From the Industrial Revolution onwards, various social and industrial changes occurred nationally and locally which created a 'perceived need' for pre-school childcare in Birmingham, but education for the pre-school child did not receive consideration until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historically, women without access to childminders had to limit the type of paid work they were able to carry out to fit with their childcare arrangements or they would have to leave their child unattended. As an industrial city, there was probably always a necessity to access pre-school childcare by working mothers in Birmingham and since the Industrial Revolution the young children of working mothers were left with childminders or sent to school with older brothers and sisters.⁵ However, it was not the psychological needs of the children or the search for individual development that influenced childcare provision, but the pressures to provide an increased workforce.⁶ Even though local officials wanted to improve the lives of the under-fives, early efforts to provide pre-school childcare in the city until 1918 happened through voluntary and philanthropic activity.

⁵ Whitbread, N., *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School: A History of Infant and Nursery Education in Britain* (London, 1972), p. xii.

⁶ Bell, J., 'The Provision of Nursery Education in England and Wales to 1967 with Special Reference to North-East England', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Durham, 2011), p. 22.

The changes created by industrialisation and urbanisation revealed to the upper classes how improving the health and education of the working classes would be of benefit to themselves.⁷ In Birmingham, there was a determined move towards trying to achieve this objective. Philanthropy was an important factor in the local provision of pre-school childcare through a Free Kindergarten movement, until state responsibility for this service emerged at the end of the First World War. Birmingham council was innovative and receptive to new ideas, and it was admired and respected nationally and internationally. Any efforts to increase pre-school education were slow, restricted by lack of financial support from central government. Nevertheless, Birmingham philanthropists and officials still managed to establish a reputation as experts in this provision.

During the nineteenth century a foundation emerged that fostered the development of pre-school education in Birmingham. The examples offered are not exhaustive but present an indication of how and why the perception of the pre-school child was changing. Firstly, the composition of Birmingham's workforce altered and affected infant mortality. According to the Children's Employment Commission, Birmingham's infant mortality rate in 1843 lay fourth among the large manufacturing towns (unidentified), with one half of the total deaths registered to children under five. Commissioners of this report felt it 'difficult to disconnect this awful mortality from the fact that the great bulk of the married females are engaged in daily labour'.⁸ Demand for the labour of children, and of women increased. There were hundreds of

⁷ Baldock, P., *Developing Early Childhood Services: Past, Present and Future* (Berkshire, 2011), p. 22.

⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Children's Employment Commission*, 'Second report of the commissioners: Trades and manufactures' (1843) [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: September 17, 2015) p. 101.

unemployed men in towns – Birmingham being one – whose income was supplemented by the earnings of their wives and children. The commissioners considered this shift was ‘viewed by all parties as one of the most deeply-seated evils operating on the manufacturing population’.⁹ This reversal of roles was for a number of reasons. Women and children were cheaper to employ; and with their small hands and fingers, they found it easier to carry out the more delicate jobs, such as those in the pen industry. Also, the idea ‘of women entering paid employment challenged conventional opinion’.¹⁰ That women should remain at home and be kept by their husbands was reflective of middle-class culture, not something working-class families could afford to adhere to.¹¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, the employment of working-class mothers of under-fives in Birmingham was a feature of the local workforce. Infant mortality was unlikely to fall if women remained in the workforce. Intervention was required if this was to reduce.

Secondly, a state education system developed, but the introduction of compulsory education for older children in 1880 was counter-productive for nursery provision.¹² The number of elementary education places for the under-fives fell. Even though not intended for younger children, nationally in 1871-1872, there were 18,755 children under three and 268,879 aged three to five attending primary school.¹³ The state, concerned to meet the needs of those children who were compelled to attend school, did not consider the pre-school child of the lower classes. Provision was left to the

⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁰ Baldock, P., *Developing Early Childhood Services: Past, Present and Future* (Berkshire, 2011), pp. 24-25.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Parliamentary papers [Online], <http://www.parliament.co.uk> (Accessed: March 17, 2015)

Compulsory school-leaving age rose to fourteen years in 1918. Lawson, J., and Silver, H., *A Social History of Education in England* (London, 1976), pp. 321-324.

¹³ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971), p. 23.

philanthropists, voluntary movements and parents. Locally some experimentation into nursery provision was taking place. Two day nurseries were established in Birmingham, both funded by charitable contributions, with the first opening in around 1876 and the other in about 1884.¹⁴ The motivation for one of these crèches was not to benefit local young children or their working mothers but represented a middle-class effort to prevent prostitution. Birmingham Ladies Association (BLA) opened a training home at Summer Hill to prepare wayward and troublesome girls (seen to be at moral risk) for domestic service.¹⁵ A nursery developed over the years, accommodating fifteen children which was intended to act as a training facility for the girls at the home.¹⁶ It did not admit illegitimate children.¹⁷ Membership of the BLA comprised mainly local philanthropic women who, whether unconsciously or otherwise, had a shared assumption for what was deemed suitable education for working-class women. Early on, though, some local officials recognised the benefits of official-led pre-school education. Their request for financial support, however, to provide this facility was declined by London officials who considered that these two crèches successfully met the needs of the locality – a conclusion that was highly unlikely.¹⁸ Increasingly the Council assumed responsibility for key services, and the town was described as ‘The Best-Governed City In The World’ in an 1890 American publication.¹⁹ Philanthropists began to move into areas of local governance, utilising

¹⁴ Spencer, A., *Crèches or Day Nurseries: Report of the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department as to Crèches or Day Nurseries* (London, 1904).

¹⁵ Bartley, P., 'Preventing Prostitution: The Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Young Girls in Birmingham, 1887-1914', *Women's History Review* (January 1, 1998), volume 7, issue 1, pp. 37-60.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Spencer, A., *Crèches or Day Nurseries: Report of the Chief Officer of the Public Control Department as to Crèches or Day Nurseries* (London, 1904).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Baldock, P., *Developing Early Childhood Services: Past, Present and Future* (Berkshire, 2011),

the experience gained by their voluntary work. This group included middle-class women who directed their attention towards the education, health and wellbeing of women and children.²⁰

Thirdly, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was an improved understanding of health, infection and infant mortality and the alarm was raised in official circles about the health and fitness of soldiers recruited to fight in the Boer Wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902.²¹ The insanitary conditions of the poor threatened not only the health of the lower classes but also that of their 'betters'. Thus, child health came to dominate concerns about children as pressures grew to ensure that there were sufficient fit young men to defend their country in times of war.²² Mothers were encouraged to breast feed babies for longer and not return to work too soon. Maternal and infant care became one of the most important of Birmingham Corporation's activities.²³ The Council appointed four women health visitors in 1899 to work in the poorer parts of the city, who were the first full-time municipal health visitors in the country.²⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, pre-school education was still not at the forefront of government planning. Locally, as the twentieth century approached, a necessity for pre-school childcare

p. 23. Ralph, J., 'The Best-Governed City in the World, (Birmingham)', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June 1, 1890), volume 81, issue 481, pp. 99-111; Hennock, E. P., *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London, 1973), p 62. Julian Ralph (1853-1903) was an American correspondent who wrote for American and English publications and was resident in London for more than 10 years. *The New York Times*, 'Death of Julian Ralph' (January 21, 1903), Obituaries. Little can be found on Ralph but see Paul Lancaster. Lancaster, P., *Gentleman of the Press: The Life and Times of an Early Reporter, Julian Ralph of the Sun* (New York, 1992).

²⁰ Hopkins, E., *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City* (Stroud, 2001), p. 113.

²¹ Lawson, J., and Silver, H., *A Social History of Education in England* (London, 1976), pp. 377-379.

²² Baldock, P., *Developing Early Childhood Services: Past, Present and Future* (Berkshire, 2011), p. 26.

²³ Author unidentified, 'Political and Administrative History: Local Government and Public Services', in: Stephens, W. B. (ed.) *Victoria County History, A History of the County of Warwick, volume 7, The City of Birmingham* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 318-353.

²⁴ Ibid.

was recognised, even though support from central government for such provision was not forthcoming. Any childcare available was limited and reliant upon philanthropic effort.

The early twentieth century saw the beginning of an acceptance of the benefits of pre-school education; this encouraged a period of exploration and experimentation, but locally there was still little actual provision. An innovative project developed in the city to provide free kindergarten facilities for children of the working classes. Even though few children could actually benefit from this facility, it marked the beginning of the Birmingham nursery school movement and raised the city's profile as supplier of pre-school education for the working classes. Early infant education up to the age of six was simply training provided in the home.²⁵ The German Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) laid the foundation for modern nursery school education.²⁶ Froebel's kindergarten education was banned in German states in 1850, following a campaign by the Prussian authorities to quell democratic movements in the late 1840s. Many individuals dedicated to Froebel's educational theories migrated to Britain where the 'Froebel movement' was born in 1851.²⁷ Early kindergartens were aimed at middle- rather than lower-class children until a free kindergarten financed by William Mather (1838-1920) was opened in Manchester in 1872, followed by a second the following year.²⁸ Tessa Blackstone suggests: 'These constituted the only exceptions to the rule that the kindergarten was an early form of

²⁵ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933), p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ University of Roehampton, 'Froebel History' [Online], <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk> (Accessed: April 8, 2015).

²⁸ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971), p. 27.

pre-school education, confined to the middle-class child.'²⁹ Froebelian kindergartens were provided by a small sector of the middle classes who set up privately-run institutions out of the conviction that their children needed something which the home could not provide.³⁰ Kindergartens were substantially to serve the middle classes, but it took the foresight of one lady to open them up to the working classes locally.

Julia Lloyd (1867-1955), who came from a local Quaker family with a tradition of civic engagement (Figure 3.1), led Birmingham's free kindergarten movement.³¹



Figure 3.1: Julia Lloyd (c. 1932) ³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

³¹ Watts, R., 'Julia Lloyd' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

Evidence does not indicate whether Lloyd was planning to build from Mather's free kindergarten experiment in Manchester although she was probably aware of that work.

Lloyd's kindergarten career began in 1888 when she became one of teacher trainer Caroline Garrison Bishop's first kindergarten students and she remained involved with pre-school education within the city for more than thirty years.³³ Bishop had recently returned from the Pestalozzi-Froebel-Haus, Berlin.³⁴ She moved to Birmingham in around 1883 where she acquired and ran a kindergarten at 316 Hagley Road for twenty-three years, adding a transition class, schoolrooms and training college to the original kindergarten. Edgbaston Froebel College, School and Kindergarten was the culmination of Bishop's work to promote Froebelian education in the city.³⁵ At that time, kindergartens were usually confined to the middle classes, and it is probably safe to assume that this establishment was the same. However, Bishop's support of the local free kindergarten movement is evident by her membership of its committee.

Lloyd wanted to extend kindergartens to the poor but support from the authorities was not forthcoming. Even though the school board was interested in kindergarten

³² LSE Library, BAECE, 13/3, Nursery School Association (c. 1932).

³³ LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931). Julia Lloyd resigned from Selly Oak Nursery Committee on January 4, 1935 after 30 years working towards nursery provision in Birmingham. LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection.

³⁴ LSE Library, BAECE, 13/3, Nursery School Association, 'Image of Julia Lloyd' (c. 1932). Founded in Berlin in 1874 the Pestalozzi-Froebel-Haus educational concepts were based on the ideas of Friedrich Froebel and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi - Froebel - Haus [Online], <http://www.pfh-berlin> (Accessed: March 22, 2015).

³⁵ Last, E., *Memoir of Caroline Garrison Bishop of Edgbaston Froebel College, School and Kindergarten* (London, 1936); Read, J., 'Caroline Garrison Bishop' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: March 3, 2017).

methods, it saw them as a way to 'enliven ordinary subjects in large classes not as a way of education in itself'.³⁶ Support for Lloyd's work, however, came from Birmingham's civic, industrial, and philanthropic elite. Mr and Mrs Barrow Cadbury offered to build a room for kindergarten work in 1903 in Greet, a poor area of the city, provided that Lloyd would take responsibility for the project.³⁷ Lloyd arranged a meeting with local philanthropic families, including other members of the Lloyd family, the Cadburys and Sturges, to discuss opportunities for educational work with poor children from three to five years of age.³⁸ The Greet Free People's Kindergarten (TGFPK) opened in June 1904.³⁹ Records show that six girls were admitted on the first day.⁴⁰ Lloyd noticed a difference in the children as they 'developed in intelligence and curiosity, orderliness, and cleanliness'.⁴¹ The Committee considered that it would be advantageous to form themselves into the Birmingham People's Kindergarten Association (BPKA) in 1908.⁴² Work at Greet was keenly observed and staff welcomed thirteen visitors during the first month.⁴³ Many of the students trained

³⁶ Watts, R., 'Julia Lloyd' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

³⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931).

³⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, L/.48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association'; LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931).

³⁹ Following seventeen years based at Greet, the nursery school was relocated to 26 Tiverton Road, Selly Oak in 1921. LOB, Archives and Collections, LS 11/6/84/385839, Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association, Lloyd, J., 'The Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Its First Thirty Years 1904-1935'.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Watts, R., 'Julia Lloyd' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

⁴² LOB, Archives and Collections, L/.48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association'.

⁴³ LOB, Archives and Collections, LS 11/6/84/385839, Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association, Lloyd, J., 'The Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Its First Thirty Years 1904-1935'.

at Bishop's Edgbaston College became superintendents at Greet.⁴⁴ The kindergarten under the supervision of Lloyd became a training centre for girls, mostly from council schools, in the care and management of children.⁴⁵ Its financial needs were supported by private philanthropy.

Bishop and Lloyd's establishments were examples of nursery nurse training in its infancy. Birmingham's second free kindergarten was opened by the Greet committee in 1907 at the Women's Settlement, Summer Lane (Figure 3.2), with a third proposed to open in 1908 on the premises of the Medical Mission in Floodgate Street.⁴⁶ It has not been possible to confirm whether that kindergarten actually opened. A small kindergarten class was established at Memorial Hall near 'Farm', Sparkbrook (the Lloyd's family home) for a short time. However, it was dissolved in 1919 once the 1918 Education Act appeared to fulfil its demands for LEAs to supply nursery schools.⁴⁷ The remarkable image of children playing at Summer Lane Kindergarten (Figure 3.2) is undated but probably photographed during the Edwardian period due to the clothing worn. Even though the kindergarten is surrounded by tall brick industrial buildings, an effort was made to create a feeling of space by ensuring that the play area for the children included grass, a tree and flowers. In addition to play, the children were encouraged to grow plants as part of their daily routine. In

⁴⁴ Last, E., *Memoir of Caroline Garrison Bishop of Edgbaston Froebel College, School and Kindergarten* (London, 1936); Read, J., 'Caroline Garrison Bishop' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: March 3, 2017).

⁴⁵ Watts, R., 'Julia Lloyd' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: December 30, 2018).

⁴⁶ In almost every British town in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century there were associations of ladies similar to the Birmingham Women's Settlement devoted to improving the health and living conditions of women and children (Additional information see appendix 1). Rimmer, J., *Troubles Shared: The Story of a Settlement 1899-1979* (Birmingham, 1980).

⁴⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931).

Birmingham during the Second World War, William Blatz criticised British nursery educators for their 'insensate emphasis' – 'That children love flowers'.⁴⁸



Figure 3.2: Summer Lane Kindergarten, The Settlement, Birmingham (c. 1907-1914)⁴⁹

In 1917, to disassociate themselves from any German connections, the Greet Free People's Kindergarten changed its name to Nursery School; similarly, the Birmingham People's Kindergarten Association became the Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association (BNSA).⁵⁰ Birmingham's reputation in pre-school education was developing. The association's work was recognised at a local and national level. An article in *The Queen* in 1917 drew attention to the pioneering labours of Julia Lloyd and her colleagues of the BNSA, stating that their two nursery schools 'may well serve as models for study by those who wish to have nursery schools in their

⁴⁸ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942). 'Insensate' is a word to describe something without feelings or consciousness.

⁴⁹ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association.

⁵⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association'.

own towns'.⁵¹ Lloyd records how frequently visitors came to Greet, not only training-college students but also local and national education officials, to experience the work carried out there.⁵² Greet Nursery School matured and relocated, becoming Selly Oak Nursery School, which survives under the management of the Local Education Authority. However small, the nucleus of structured nursery education for working-class children of the city was emerging.

First World War

Birmingham was an important producer of munitions at times of war, and it was evident that women were needed to manufacture these items. In theory this offered a perfect opportunity to move pre-school childcare forward but in reality, implementation stagnated. It might be expected that the First World War would produce a pattern of childcare activities that could be adapted in the next war, but this was not the case. What does emerge is a pattern of behaviour by central officials, which was repeated in the Second World War: for example, a refusal to accept responsibility, coupled with delays and blockages. Because of the earlier work carried out by the Birmingham Free Kindergarten movement as the First World War approached, a foundation existed on which wartime provision could be built, but very little pre-school childcare existed, whether official or voluntary. Birmingham's industrial history dictated that more women were needed to produce the munitions required for war. The establishment of childcare to help any increase in the female workforce was unlikely to be met without local or central government intervention. Even though central government wanted women to join the workforce, prejudices and

⁵¹ Ibid., 'The Educational Porch of Life, Nursery Schools and their future' by Mrs Margaret Heitland, Reprinted from *The Queen*, (September 15, 1917).

⁵² Ibid., Minutes of meeting Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association (February 24, 1919).

avoidance tactics by some of their representatives came into play. Responsibility fell to the munition industries to make some sort of provision or else mothers had to make their own private minding arrangements. Locally, officials recognised the necessity for wartime childcare, but they were constrained by the lack of government funding. Official childcare arrangements for women munition workers did not begin to emerge until a late stage of the war; once they did, responsibility fell upon the welfare department of the Ministry of Munitions. Any financial support to provide wartime nurseries or crèches was not sanctioned by the treasury to the Ministry of Munitions until September 1916.⁵³ Prior to that date, pre-school childcare was usually provided through industry, voluntary agencies or private minding arrangements. Pre-empting central government guidance, one crèche opened in Birmingham on January 1, 1916 (Figure 3.3).⁵⁴



Figure 3.3: 'Dinner time at a crèche for the children of women munition workers in Birmingham' 1916⁵⁵

⁵³ TNA, MH55/1667, Ministry of Health, Day Nurseries, Nurseries in the War of 1914-1918 (December 30, 1941).

⁵⁴ *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 'The sportswoman's page' (January 1, 1916), p. 528
© Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.

⁵⁵ Ibid. The author is grateful to Dr Janet Sullivan for drawing attention to this image.

Even though identified as a Birmingham crèche, Figure 3.3 leaves a number of questions unanswered, such as where it was based, how many children it was able to support and who provided this service. It shows furniture of the appropriate size; however, there are few toys, and the staff appear to be wearing nursing uniforms. This establishment probably focused on care rather than on the educational needs of children. Text supporting the image offers little information other than stating how the children were fed, bathed, and dressed in overalls for sixpence a day.⁵⁶ As the government-funded crèche at Washwood Heath did not open until January 1917, this establishment was probably a private concern. Women employed in munitions were favoured where nursery or crèche places were provided, but nationally throughout the First World War, there were only between thirty-one and thirty-three nurseries managed by local authorities for the children of munition workers.⁵⁷ It is probably safe to say that they were not sufficient to make a significant impact.

National appeals called for women to work in munition factories, as shown in the poster (Figure 3.4), although officials gave little consideration regarding who should care for young children. Working mothers of pre-school children agitating for crèches found themselves at risk of being morally judged by officials. George Duckworth, Ministry of Labour, was not convinced that crèches were required in munition areas and carried out his own unscientific research to support his case. This consisted of standing outside an unidentified factory to observe the women workers as they left the building.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Correspondence written by George Duckworth in 1918 states 33 wartime nurseries or crèches while a report written in 1941 when considering plans for the Second World War says there were 31. TNA, MH55/1667, Ministry of Health, Day Nurseries, Nurseries in the War of 1914-1918 (December 30, 1941); TNA, MUN4/4546, Ministry of Munitions of War, Day Nurseries for Children of Munition Workers.

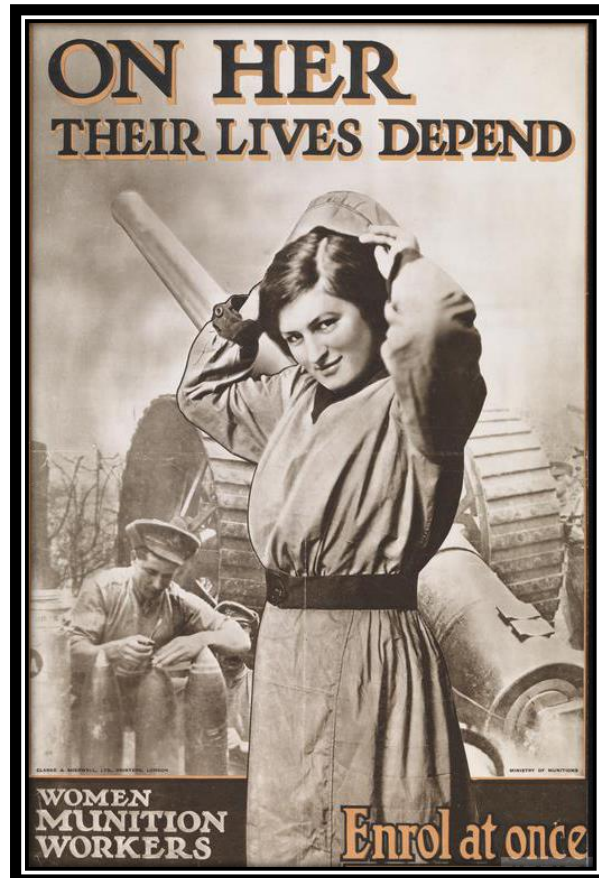


**Figure 3.4: Poster appealing for women in munition factories
(First World War) ⁵⁸**

Duckworth concluded from his observations that the class of married women employed in ‘filling’ factories is not one that would send their children to crèches, if provided.⁵⁹ If they did send their children to a crèche, they should not be employed in a ‘filling’ factory. Duckworth reasoned that ‘filling’ factories required and should engage ‘a reasonable type of woman’ and that such women were not likely to send their children to a public crèche. His derogatory reference to ‘a reasonable type of woman’ was presumably pre-judging the class of women who would work in the

⁵⁸ IWM, Art.IWM PST 0402, *Ministry of Munitions*, 'On her their lives depend' (1916) [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: September 5, 2015), © Art.IWM PST 0402.

⁵⁹ 'Filling factories' dealt with the filling of munitions. *Historic England*, List entry number 140981, 'Former World War I national filling factory, Banbury' [Online], <http://www.historicengland.org.uk> (Accessed: October 17, 2019).

factory or use a crèche. He continued: 'After watching the factory empty itself I should say from the appearance of the women that there were no more than 4, out of a shift of 850, who might make use of a crèche.'⁶⁰ The Government view was that public crèches were not required but an examination of Birmingham newspapers covering the war period disclosed a different story, identifying the deaths of two children. One four-month-old child was dropped by a drunken childminder, and a three-year-old was burnt to death while being minded by a sibling.⁶¹ Other unsupervised pre-school-age child deaths were recorded but it was unclear whether their mothers were carrying out war-work. This was probably not a wartime phenomenon; Birmingham was an industrial city and the temptation to supplement family incomes may have been too great to keep mothers at home. Sadly, providing nursery or crèche places did not guarantee safety for pre-school children as a double burning fatality of two six-month-old babies was recorded at a Day Nursery on the Coventry Road.⁶²

Not only mothers experienced obstruction by government officials. Local authorities aware of the necessity for official childcare in their area faced avoidance tactics from central government departments. A reluctance to clarify instructions was sometimes deliberate, as demonstrated in correspondence between two government officials: 'Of course, the less elaboration the less we bind ourselves over details and it is very difficult to say exactly how detailed points should be dealt with until we have further

⁶⁰ TNA, LAB2/50/7, Ministry of Labour, Welfare, Day Nurseries, The provision of crèches in munition areas (July 24, 1916).

⁶¹ *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 'Birmingham Child's Death' (December 21, 1914), p. 3; *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 'Birmingham Child Fatally Burned' (June 24, 1914), p. 5.

⁶² *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 'Day Nursery Tragedy' (January 30, 1917), p. 4.

experience.’⁶³ Not all local authorities, particularly those for industrial cities such as Birmingham, could wait while government representatives gained experience. Recognising that childcare for women munition workers during the First World War could not be met purely from voluntary sources, the local Public Health and Housing Committee felt that it was the corporation’s duty to take action. Birmingham applied for central funding to provide crèches. However, not content only to provide places for munition workers, Birmingham leaders pressurised central officials to allow them to include the young children of all mothers carrying out war-work. Reluctant to make a decision, government officials suggested: ‘It may be easier for the Local Government Board to “wink” at illegal expenditure by certain authorities if it is definitely for purposes aided by the Ministry.’⁶⁴ Avoidance tactics by officials occasionally backfired, particularly when those with political influence were involved. Central officials decided to withdraw previously approved funding for a special scheme to open a crèche for munition workers in Birmingham after becoming concerned about the project’s rising costs. Neville Chamberlain, Lord Mayor of Birmingham, had a personal interest in the project and was not pleased with this about-turn. When challenged, Mr G H Pelham, Board of Education, and Mr S Dannreuther, Accounting Officer of the Ministry of Munitions, eventually agreed that the project should proceed. This about-turn was due to concerns about the case becoming politically contentious rather than to any cost reduction. Pelham and Dannreuther were consoled by the realisation that the service was only a wartime measure.’⁶⁵

⁶³ TNA, LAB2/50/7, Ministry of Labour, Welfare, Day Nurseries, G H Pelham (September 14, 1916).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Presumably, the project in question was a crèche at the National Shell Factory, Midlands Works, Washwood Heath, where a large munition works was based. Eventually opening in January 1917, it accommodated approximately sixty children.⁶⁶ Reportedly, the factory employed over 900 women in February 1917, and sixty crèche places was not sufficient.⁶⁷ Eventually, five pre-school childcare centres supervised by voluntary agencies and one by the municipality became available in Birmingham. These crèches accommodated approximately 200 infants and toddlers. Probably over ten thousand children in the city required minding due to women's war-work. These crèches did not meet the actual demand and did not find universal favour locally.⁶⁸ The council had approved a proposal to establish three or four additional crèches but the Public Health Committee decided not to continue with the plan.⁶⁹ On December 18, 1918, the Birmingham Municipal Munition Day Nursery transferred to the Corporation Maternity and Child Welfare Centre under the supervision of the Board of Education.⁷⁰ The term 'nursery education' emerged around this time although it did not immediately enter into standard usage. Advocates of Friedrich Froebel in this country wanted an English alternative to 'kindergarten' as there was embarrassment about being followers of a German thinker during this tense period.⁷¹ Surprisingly, the First World War did not leave much of a legacy in terms of increased nursery provision. Rather than pushing pre-

⁶⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/27, Proceedings of Birmingham City Council, 1916-1917, p. 59.

⁶⁷ TNA, MUN4/3909, Ministry of Munitions of War, Day Nursery at Washwood Heath (National Shell Factory, Birmingham).

⁶⁸ Brazier, R. H. and Sandford, E., *Birmingham and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Birmingham, 1921), p. 288.

⁶⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/27, Proceedings of Birmingham City Council, 1916-1917, p. 194; TNA, MUN4/4546, Ministry of Munitions of War, Day Nurseries for Children of Munition Workers.

⁷⁰ TNA, LAB2/50/7, Ministry of Labour, Welfare, Day Nurseries.

⁷¹ Baldock, P., *Developing Early Childhood Services: Past, Present and Future* (Berkshire, 2011), p. 41.

school childcare forward, the situation actually stagnated and failed to contribute towards the framework for the next war. Nevertheless, after the war, there was a return to the innovative practices similar to those prior to 1914.

The interwar period

Despite their failure to significantly increase nurseries during the First World War, the local activists for pre-school education, whether philanthropists or officials, persisted in pursuing this aim during the interwar period. The period was a time of innovation, experimentation, increasing knowledge and building a reputation as pre-school education providers. These processes established a context for provision during the Second World War. Following the First World War there was a move towards state responsibility for nursery education. During the 1930s, as well, progressive educators and architects began to consider how design could stimulate education: one result was experimental approaches to nursery school architecture in Birmingham. During the interwar period, the increase in nurseries was not systematic but a stop-start process. As the Second World War approached, Birmingham's pre-school childcare was still mainly reliant on philanthropy although the local council offered support when not restricted by central government. Locally, day nurseries managed by the Public Health Department did not play a part in the provision as they probably did elsewhere in the country. There may not have been many nurseries in Birmingham; nevertheless, one feature in the late 1930s was experimentation. The city's first purpose-built nursery school, designed by architect William Benslyn, reflected theories that the design of buildings and their interior could benefit the pre-school child (Chapter 7). Birmingham City Council invested time and finance to provide pre-school education and, by 1939, even though there was not an

abundance of nursery schools in Birmingham, the city had succeeded in achieving national prominence in pre-school education. Birmingham had become a fertile environment upon which William Blatz and his team could build during the Second World War (Chapters 5 and 6).

Local government's contribution to pre-school education was restricted by the Board of Education. However, more regional flexibility existed once the Education Act of 1918 was passed, in which clause 19 permitted LEAs to supply or aid the supply of nursery schools (this expression included nursery classes) with funding provided by Parliament. The act did not force LEAs to establish and maintain nursery schools, leaving it to individual councils to decide whether to take on the responsibility. It did, however, allow LEAs to provide grants of up to 50% towards the running costs to groups like the BNSA. The status of nursery schools began to transfer from private philanthropy to public dependence.⁷² Nationally, LEAs took over several existing free kindergartens, which developed into nursery schools once state grants became available in 1919.⁷³ Birmingham Education Committee took over the management of the Settlement project from the BNSA, creating a municipal nursery school for eighty children – probably one of the first established under the 1918 Education Act.⁷⁴ The Settlement project's progress was monitored and waiting lists for places grew quickly.⁷⁵

⁷² Education England, Fisher, Herbert., 'Education Act, 1918' [Online], <http://www.educationengland.org.uk> (Accessed: February 5, 2014), clause 19.

⁷³ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933), p. 35.

⁷⁴ Glasby, J. P., 'Surviving Change: A Case Study of the Birmingham Settlement 1899-1999', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Birmingham, 2001), p. 133.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Birmingham LEA did not restrict itself to one project but also worked with local voluntary nursery organisations. The old Greet Nursery School transferred to new premises at Tiverton Road, Selly Oak, in 1921 and submitted annual applications to the LEA for a small grant to assist with running costs. The school was able to accommodate forty children and it remained under the management of a voluntary committee.⁷⁶ Greet Nursery School remained open as a training centre for students.⁷⁷ Even though they were not compulsory, Birmingham LEA supported the local voluntary nurseries in the form of small annual grants towards their running costs. In exchange for this grant, their day-to-day running and development were overseen by the LEA, which carried out regular checks. Voluntary nurseries were asked to submit annual reports with their grant applications to ensure that standards were maintained.⁷⁸ This enabled the LEA to control the standards within these establishments without the responsibility of direct management.

By 1919, Birmingham nursery activists considered their role to be redundant because the need for the education of the pre-school child had finally been acknowledged by the state, noting that the Education Act 'shows that the principles which have inspired our work are now considered to be vital'.⁷⁹ In recognition that their work had come to a natural end, the following resolution was passed at a meeting on February 24, 1919:

⁷⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, p. 69.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association'; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1942 (1941). The Education Act, 1918 is occasionally referred to as the Fisher Education Act.

⁷⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association', Minutes of meeting Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association (February 24, 1919).

That the pioneer work of the Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association being rendered no longer necessary, through the provisions of the 1918 Education Bill, this Meeting hereby resolves to dissolve the Association – and in so doing wishes every success to the work of the Local Education Committee amongst the children of Nursery School age, in the City of Birmingham.⁸⁰

The early pioneering work of local advocates to provide pre-school education ensured that they were usually involved in discussions at a national level. However, their dissolution was probably premature as recognition did not necessarily translate into delivery: the role of the nursery school activists was not entirely over.

Nursery education still lacked universal recognition as being beneficial, even in areas such as Birmingham where there were supporters; however, a municipal structure for providing nursery education emerged, accompanied by a stop-start process to increase this facility. The Chief Education Officer of Birmingham, Dr Innes, suggested that the Board of Education, Local Education Authority, teachers and even the man-in-the-street still needed to be convinced of the need for nursery education.⁸¹ Mrs Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury considered that the nursery school movement progressed slowly because those who had not seen nurseries in operation thought them unnecessary or harmful.⁸² Additionally, the early 1920s was a lean period in educational development, owing to the severe financial restrictions enforced by the government, and it was not until 1924 that the Board of Education began to entertain proposals from LEAs to build new nursery schools.⁸³ Restrained by this inability to create new establishments, Birmingham LEA set up an open-air

⁸⁰ Ibid., Minutes of meeting Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association (February 24, 1919).

⁸¹ LSE Library, BAECE 13/4, Nursery School Association, 'The Nursery School Conference at Birmingham' (June 18, 1926).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, p. 68.

nursery class in 1924 for 30 children at Dartmouth Street Infants School, in an effort to ease the situation.⁸⁴ The country may have been experiencing financial crisis but political support for the provision of nursery schools was growing, probably due to women's participation in politics. Nancy Astor, the first female MP to take a seat in Parliament, was an advocate for the delivery and expansion of nursery education.⁸⁵ Blatz was invited by Astor to spend a weekend with her at Cliveden in August, 1942.⁸⁶ While nursery education does not appear to have increased dramatically due to this female support, it probably did not impede the cause as it kept the subject under discussion at a national level.

Activists for nursery education began to organise themselves strategically.

Nationally, nursery school activists joined forces and the first branch of the Nursery School Association (NSA) was founded in 1923.⁸⁷ On November 26, 1926 Birmingham representatives of this organisation discussed forming a local branch.⁸⁸ It was established in December 1926, and Birmingham became the first regional branch of the association.⁸⁹ By this time, the city's nursery school movement had already been strongly supported for at least twenty-three years by influential local families but they were not alone in their mission. In addition to the expected

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 69; LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931). Margaret and Rachel McMillan had founded the first Open-Air Nursery School in Deptford in 1914. Liebovich, B., 'The McMillan Sisters, The Roots of the Open-nursery, and Breaking the Cycle of Poverty', *Social and Education History* (February 23, 2018), volume 7, issue 1, pp. 78-96.

⁸⁵ Brehony, K. F., 'Lady Astor's Campaign for Nursery Schools in Britain, 1930-1939: Attempting to Valorize Cultural Capital in a Male-Dominated Political Field', *History of Education Quarterly* (May, 2009), Volume 49, No 2, pp. 196-210.

⁸⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (August 8, 1942).

⁸⁷ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971), p. 42.

⁸⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection, Malden, J., 'The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962' (University of Birmingham, 1964).

⁸⁹ The British Association for Early Childhood Education [Online], <http://www.early-education.org.uk> (Accessed: October 21, 2019).

philanthropic family members, the 1928 membership of the Birmingham NSA comprised two councillors, representatives from primary education, including one from the local Education Office, and a newspaper reporter (Appendix 2). The membership list confirms the belief that the care of young children largely fell to women to organise. From a membership of forty-two, only three male members are listed – two of whom were probably in primary education.⁹⁰ It is unclear whether these attended in their official capacity but this diverse group showed that some took local pre-school education seriously. Birmingham always considered itself a leader in educational provision and the Education Committee of 1920 was described by historian, Asa Briggs as ‘one of the most efficient organizations of its type in the country’.⁹¹ Many decisions made by the Committee anticipated national education policy, and its members may have felt frustrated by Government restrictions.⁹² Local demand was obviously still present because in 1923 one nursery school in the city had three times as many children on the waiting list as there were places.⁹³ National recognition of the work carried out by Julia Lloyd and her colleagues with pre-school children in Birmingham continued to grow. Correspondence to Lloyd from the NSA suggested holding their 1926 annual summer conference in Birmingham because of the interesting work carried out there.⁹⁴ Remarkably, even though pre-school education in Birmingham was limited, the city was recognised as an important provider.

⁹⁰ TNA, ED24/1466, Board of Education, The Nursery School of Great Britain 5th Annual Report (December, 1928).

⁹¹ Briggs, A., *History of Birmingham, volume II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London, 1952), p. 237.

⁹² Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), pp. 332-333.

⁹³ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971), p. 8.

⁹⁴ LSE Library, BAECE 13/7-10, Nursery School Association, Correspondence to Miss Lloyd from unnamed person (March 20, 1925).

Attempts by Birmingham LEA to improve the lives of the under-fives in the city through pre-school education were slow due to government restrictions but the challenges did not deter the LEA. When progress was blocked, the LEA, with a reputation as leaders rather than followers, attempted to find alternative ways to increase this provision. In the 1930s, the Board of Education finally turned its attention towards the progression of infant and nursery education. On behalf of the Board of Education, the *Report of The Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (sometimes referred to as the 'Hadow Report'), presented its findings which included contributions from a number of Birmingham officials.⁹⁵ This consultative committee concluded 'that the nursery school is a desirable adjunct to the national system of education; and that in districts where the housing and general economic conditions are seriously below the average, a nursery school should, if possible, be provided'.⁹⁶ With Board of Education approval, LEAs could establish nursery schools for under-fives.⁹⁷ Government encouragement enabled local education officials to respond to the challenge and the Birmingham Education Committee considered that the central areas of the city with their cramped housing were the type of district most in need of the facilities nursery schools could offer. The Education Committee embarked upon a scheme between 1930 and 1933 to provide 1,500 new places in nursery schools and classes at a rate of 500 places in each of the three succeeding years.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, p. 69.

Obstructions in the progress of nursery provision could arise locally as well as centrally. Council support and approval were required for the scheme but Birmingham Councillors did not necessarily agree that providing nursery places for children living in congested areas was a remedy for the problem. The 'proposal to provide nursery schools and classes for certain children between the ages of two and five and to include the scheme in the programme of educational development for 1930-1933' was opposed by some councillors. Alderman George Kenrick, for example argued that improving housing conditions was the way forward. However, following lengthy debate, the original nursery proposal was eventually approved.⁹⁹ The first part of the programme was to provide a nursery school for 240 children, and a nursery class within an existing infant school, and to increase the provision already in place at Dartmouth Street School. However, the financial crisis of 1931 led to the abandonment of the scheme with nothing more accomplished than purchasing land for the site of the nursery school.¹⁰⁰ This was the beginning of a stop-start process, which continued for a number of years as the government renewed and withdrew its support.¹⁰¹ With an estimated 46,314 under-fives at the end of July 1931, Birmingham certainly had sufficient numbers of under-fives to fill these additional places.¹⁰² Not all parents wished to send their young children to school before compulsory age but Birmingham had a long history of working mothers who may have taken advantage of this type of facility had it been available.¹⁰³ In England and

⁹⁹ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, Newspaper cutting *Birmingham Weekly Post*, 'Midland Matters' (December 7, 1929), page unidentified.

¹⁰⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, p. 70.

¹⁰¹ Blackstone, T., *A Fair Start: The Provision of Pre-school Education* (London, 1971), pp. 48-49.

¹⁰² TNA, ED69/60, Board of Education, Dartmouth Street Council Nursery School 1924-1935.

¹⁰³ Hopkins, E., *Birmingham: The Making of the Second City* (Stroud, 2001), p. 145; Jenns, K., 'Work and Employment in Birmingham', in: Chinn, C. (ed.) *Birmingham: Bibliography of a City* (Birmingham, 2003), pp. 200-222.

Wales between March 31, 1932 and July 31, 1933, only three proposals for additional nursery schools were recognised by the Board of Education, taking the total of children accommodated in nursery schools to 4,705.¹⁰⁴ Birmingham's plan for 1,500 additional places was an ambitious proposal to achieve.

Continued financial restrictions imposed by the Education Department impeded the further growth of local nursery schools, resulting in the committee exploring alternative ways to increase pre-school places in the city. Whereas London and Birmingham officials were convinced that nursery schools were preferable to nursery classes, Manchester and Leicester felt things should be the other way around.¹⁰⁵ The question of nursery schools versus classes had been under discussion for a number of years. Some nursery activists considered that classes were detrimental to the cause. At their annual meeting in January 1925, NSA members expressed a fear of nursery classes, feeling that they might be nothing more than a 'glorified baby class', possibly blocking any progression of nursery schools. The unavoidable inertia created by the lack of funding for new projects caused local officials to decide that the needs of the moment might be satisfied if some of the empty classrooms in existing schools were turned over to nursery class use. As a result, both nursery schools and classes in Birmingham grew.¹⁰⁶ It was this early tradition of placing nursery classes into elementary schools, which provided the experience that was later translated to help meet the inadequacy of wartime provision. Undeterred by lack of government approval for new projects, Birmingham officials continued their

¹⁰⁴ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933), p. 100.

¹⁰⁵ Palmer, A., 'Nursery Schools or Nursery Classes? An Analysis of National and Local Policy in England 1918-1972', Unpublished MA, (University of Roehampton, 2013), pp. 301-302.

¹⁰⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, pp. 77-78.

efforts to increase facilities for pre-school children. In 1934 experimental nursery schools were opened at the Shenley Fields and Erdington cottage homes, mainly for children living there, but with the potential for numbers to be supplemented from outside.¹⁰⁷

One type of nursery, which existed elsewhere, was not available locally. Day nurseries usually provided by the local Public Health Department could have been another source of pre-school childcare to call upon during the Second World War; however, this was not the case in Birmingham. Unlike other cities, day nurseries under the supervision of the Ministry of Health did not have a place in Birmingham's childcare at this time. Nationally, in addition to the nursery schools or classes in 1932, there were 102 day nurseries, which were set up primarily for mothers unable to care for their children. Local authorities provided nineteen of these, with the remaining eighty-three supplied by voluntary associations. Surprisingly, Birmingham was not providing this type of facility, even though the *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* for 1931 suggests that Birmingham was 'looked on as one of the most outstanding areas in this country in the development of its maternity and child welfare services'.¹⁰⁸ City officials had decided on a different experimental approach, concluding that these facilities would benefit only a few. They preferred to employ health visitors to visit mothers and babies in the home to offer advice. Health visitors may have reached more homes but it is not clear how their work reduced any necessity for day nurseries, which usually cared for the illegitimate babies of working women or young children whose mothers were ill. Even Dr Ethel Cassie, Senior

¹⁰⁷ Cassie, E., 'The Child Kept Apart from his Parents', *Public Health* (October 1937-September 1939), volume 51, pp. 299-303.

¹⁰⁸ Emslie, M., 'War in the Family', *Public Health* (October 1932 – September 1933), volume 46, pp. 386-393.

Assistant Medical Officer of Health for the area, was surprised that day nurseries were not provided, commenting that 'Birmingham is almost unique in being a large industrial city without a single day nursery, and with an absolute minimum of nursery schools, yet the number of women working in factories is very large'.¹⁰⁹ Dr Cassie contributed greatly in the development of wartime nurseries (Chapter 4).

With state nurseries restricted by central officials, local responsibility reverted to voluntary initiatives. Frustration at the continuing stop-start situation between national and local government since 1918 probably compelled the Birmingham branch of the NSA to take action. It launched an appeal for a new nursery in one of the poor areas of the city, to be funded by private donations. Some of the campaign flyers survive (Figures 3.5 and 3.6).¹¹⁰ Both the 'SOS' and 'Sam's Sorrows' appeal leaflets were created to arouse public interest and probably targeted different audiences. The 'SOS' flyer message is short, sharp and to the point in its effort to get the message across quickly. The flyer was probably aimed at those in the middle or upper classes who were able to afford the one-pound donation.

¹⁰⁹ Cassie, E., 'The Child Kept Apart from his Parents', *Public Health* (October 1937-September 1939), volume 51, pp. 299-303. Dr Ethel Cassie, born and educated in Edinburgh, was appointed senior medical officer for maternity and child welfare in Birmingham in 1921 and continued in this post until her retirement for health reasons in 1943. 'It was the quality of originality that made Ethel Cassie outstanding in health administration. She was not one to wait for a lead from others, but rather to give the lead and explore new fields.' Much of her pioneer work in maternal and child health was later embodied in Government circulars to local authorities. Author unidentified, 'Obituary Ethel Cassie, O.B.E., M.D., D.P.H.', *The British Medical Journal* (May 21, 1955), volume 1, issue 4924, pp. 1283-1284.

¹¹⁰ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association.



Figure 3.5: Appeal leaflet for Deritend Nursery School (c.1934) ¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ibid.

National Nursery Schools Association
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH.

*A Bugle Call for the last £500!—to build a
Nursery School at 1, Derby Street, Deritend.*

SAM'S SORROWS

"Sam of Deritend," rubbed his dirty little hands over his rather sulky little face and muttered: "I'se not a naughty boy. Mum said I was always in her road and sent me out to play. I pulled my train along. T'wern't my fault the lady put her foot in the string. She were awful cross, and called my train a dirty bit of firewood, and said I were naughty.

"I'd love a big red puff-puff to push, but there's such a lot of men with big feet stamping along; they'd say it were in the way.

"I picked up a lovely hoop off a tub and played with it. It goed in the road itself, and the Bobby took it away and said what a naughty, troublesome boy I were.

"Mum says the moo-cows and ba-lambs live in fields with grass and daisies. I wish there was some grass for little boys and girls. We'd be ever so good if kind peoples would give us some-where to play.

"Big Brother Jim goes to school, and he can sing and paint boo'ful pictures. Jim is quite big, he's five and I'm only two. Why can't the littler boys and girls have a school? I want one this very minute."

* * * *

Sam is one of the 1,376 Deritend toddlers who are being thwarted and cramped. How soon are they to have a chance of developing on happy, wholesome lines? If the citizens of Birmingham will seize the opportunity now offered them the dream of a Deritend Nursery School can very speedily become a reality. Already we have the plans and the site (No. 1, Derby Street, Deritend), but we need bricks (2d. each), doors (10s.), windows (£1), strong, pushable toys, small furniture (*ad lib.*).

Will you help us by sending us money, however small, or promise an annual subscription to:

G. P. ACHURCH, Esq., M.B.E.,
(Hon. Treasurer, Deritend Fellowship Nursery School)
"Crossways,"
GILLHURST ROAD, HARBORNE, BIRMINGHAM.

Figure 3.6: Appeal leaflet for Deritend Nursery School (c.1934)¹¹²

¹¹² Ibid.

The language used in the 'Sam's Sorrows' appeal poster reads as if it was composed rather than recorded; the text used is a personal plea, appealing to all classes. By suggesting a variety of donation levels, the organisation was not only targeting the usual philanthropists but also opening up the appeal to a public campaign. The local population was clearly supportive because following what was obviously a successful campaign, Deritend Nursery School, Derby Street (Figure 3.7), was opened in 1935, built and supported by private donations and subscriptions.¹¹³ This was the second voluntary nursery school opened in Birmingham after the Greet Free People's Kindergarten, which relocated to Tiverton Road, Selly Oak, in 1921.¹¹⁴

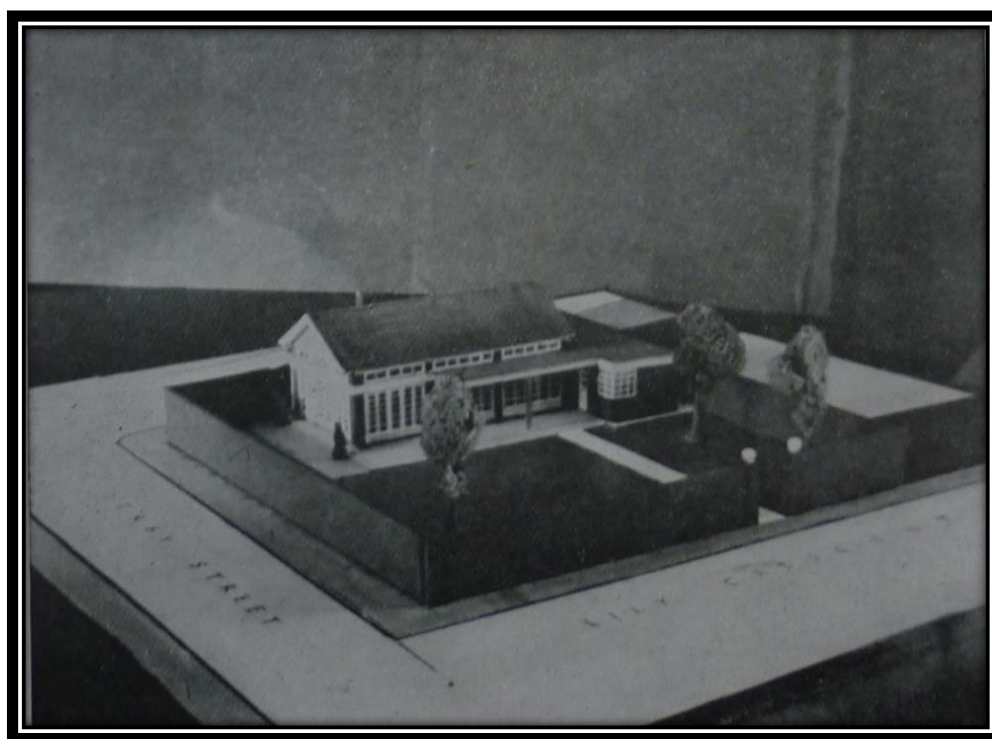


Figure 3.7: Model of proposed nursery school Deritend, Birmingham (opened 1935)¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, p. 73.

¹¹⁵ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, Birmingham Branch, A nursery school in Deritend leaflet.

The concept behind the new nursery school is illustrated in a model (Figure 3.7), with tall windows to allow plenty of natural daylight and a large area with grass and trees for the children to play in – probably a rare experience at the time for many of those living in Deritend. It displays a vision of spaciousness but in reality, once built, housing and business premises surrounded the nursery. The Education Board was aware of the Deritend fundraising appeal in July 1934. While acknowledging that Deritend Nursery School would serve children of a poor district, the Board absolved itself from any financial obligation, considering that there was ‘plenty of local money for its erection and development’.¹¹⁶ With hindsight, it is possible to debate whether local philanthropic support forced officials to meet a requirement in terms of nursery provision or merely succeeded in releasing them from their obligations. Similarly, did the NSA really understand the needs of working-class families? In September 1936, one unidentified Board of Education official suggested that NSA executive members were living in an unreal world, obsessed with the imaginary needs of children under five. The same official considered that the NSA’s desires for the under-fives’ welfare were so exhaustive and extravagant that it would be practically impossible to frame a national scheme, which would fulfil their requirements.¹¹⁷ By this time, the NSA had been advocating its views since 1923 and was able to point to considerable academic sympathy. However, even with full allowance made for government discouragement during periods of economy, the results of its labours were minimal.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ TNA, ED66/30, Board of Education, Birmingham 1934-1939.

¹¹⁷ TNA, ED102/4, Board of Education, Retention of Children over Five. Provision of Medical Inspection and Treatment at Non-recognised Nursery Schools.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Birmingham LEA's attempts to improve the lives of the under-fives in the city were not completely deterred by the Board of Education's restrictions. Locally there was a move towards purpose-built nurseries as time and finance were included in development plans for the city. During the 1930s, progressive educators and architects began to consider how design could stimulate child development.¹¹⁹ Experimentation into nurseries as places and spaces was taking shape in Birmingham (Chapter 7). Prior to the Second World War experimental school architecture was introduced in the city: Brearley Street Nursery School created by William Benslyn was one example.¹²⁰ The modernist building was strikingly different from the standard of the surrounding housing, hinting that a new way of educating children required appropriate architecture. Previous nurseries were housed either in adapted buildings or provided by the voluntary sector. However, Brearley Street Nursery School was not completed until late 1939.

As the hostilities approached, and despite attempts by philanthropists, nursery activists and local government to increase pre-school education in the city, the facilities available were patchy and limited. Nevertheless, the innovative and experimental work carried out since 1900 left them in a stronger position when it came to increasing provision to meet wartime needs. Private childminding arrangements continued to provide the majority of care, supplementing official services. Locally, ways to govern pre-school childminding emerged by the outbreak

¹¹⁹ IOE, ME/L/2, *The Architect and Building News* (February 14, 1941), pp. 124-125.

¹²⁰ Benslyn qualified at the R.C.A. and was for a time with Robert Atkinson the architect of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts and followed H. T. Buckland as architect to the City of Birmingham Education Committee. Other buildings designed by Benslyn in Birmingham included Gaumont cinemas at Colmore Circus (1931), Grove Lane, Smethwick (1934), York Road School, Hall Green and Harborne Infant and Junior School (circa 1938). Hickman, D., *Birmingham: City Buildings* (London, 1970); Foster, A., *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham* (London, 2005); Royal Institute of British Architects [Online], <http://www.architecture.com> (Accessed: January 7, 2018).

of the Second World War. Birmingham officials in particular recognised the necessity to monitor childminders officially and tried to establish a register in order to regulate standards. However, their attempts to create a framework within which mothers and minders should work had until then been unsuccessful. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Birmingham nurseries consisted of five LEA-provided and three voluntary establishments, supplying places for approximately 460 children. Early pre-school education in the city was not state-led but developed from local imaginative voluntary effort, assisted, when possible, by a progressive local government. Although enthusiastic and inventive, their results were limited and the provision available by the outbreak of the Second World War was patchy. Nevertheless, the experience and knowledge gained over the previous decades strengthened Birmingham's ability to meet the wartime nursery challenge, and this, in turn, influenced national guidance.

Conclusion

This chapter considers Birmingham's early pre-school childcare to establish its relevance to the introduction of local extensive wartime provision and experimental initiatives during the Second World War. It explores three factors, which determined the need and demand for pre-school education in Birmingham and the limitations on this provision, while considering whether Birmingham was potentially a fertile environment to provide pre-school childcare before the Second World War. Firstly, the changes which occurred industrially, socially and administratively during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to create an environment that necessitated pre-school childcare or education. Secondly, it examines the provision of pre-school childcare in Birmingham during the First World War to consider whether this was a

pertinent model for the next war. Finally, it considers the interwar period to establish what pre-school childcare was available to promote care for the children of working mothers in Birmingham as the Second World War approached. It was the significant work during the interwar period which established a pattern for the provision during the Second World War.

Early local pre-school childcare evolved thanks to the activities of pioneers who had a vision of what childhood might be. Except in times of war, it had generally evolved to improve the physical and mental health of the child rather than to support parents' needs. Birmingham's industrial nature and its historical importance in wartime rendered necessary an eventual growth in pre-school childcare. From as early as the Industrial Revolution, there were pressures for an increased workforce in the city, and that necessitated a change in the care for workers' children. Until the state assumed responsibility for health and education in the early twentieth century, the task of pre-school childcare fell to local philanthropists. As education became subject to political control, these philanthropists became members of the local government or education committee. The philanthropic elite had an opportunity to turn its vision to reality, but it was frustrated by central government officials, although when opportunities arose, it was not afraid to experiment or try different approaches. It was this openness to experimentation which forged Birmingham's reputation as providers of pre-school education and encouraged experts to carry out wartime projects. The First World War failed to set a precedent for the forthcoming hostilities, as would be expected. Nevertheless, even though the early growth of pre-school childcare was episodic, some elements had begun to develop by the outbreak of the Second World War. Few other welfare authorities came to the task of providing

wartime nurseries with knowledge gained from their own experience. Whether provided by official or voluntary sources, by the beginning of the hostilities, Birmingham had a small but relatively well-developed system of pre-school childcare in place on which to build. This would have been far more significant had it not been for the financial restrictions placed upon local officials by central government. It took the dynamic pressures of the hostilities to release these financial blockages, at which time they were able to build on their experiences to create significant wartime nursery provision only exceeded by that provided in London. How Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare was increased due to the industrial demands created by the hostilities is explored in Chapter 4, as it strives to address the third key question. To what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints affected its development?

CHAPTER 4: WARTIME PRE-SCHOOL CHILDCARE: PRESSURE, CONFLICT AND PROVISION 1939-1945

Introduction

Wartime pre-school childcare provision was a small part of a large need: to release sufficient women to carry out war-work. Childcare was an important component of Birmingham's manufacturing history during the Second World War, but the introduction of this facility was problematic and nationwide guidance did not emerge until May 1941. The creation of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare was not a simple process but reflected a complex interplay of characters, organisations and forces, all with their own aims and perspectives. Central Government departments, particularly the Ministries of Labour, Health, Education and the Exchequer, had an interest in the development of this provision. Locally, Birmingham City Council and the departments of Labour, Health and Education, played a vital role. Pro-childcare pressure groups such as the Nursery School Association with local branches, the Day Nursery Association and a variety of women's groups participated in the process, as did local industry. Private childminders were unregulated and any changes to wartime pre-school childcare left their livelihood in a vulnerable position. From a child's perspective, formal wartime nurseries were practically identical whoever the providers were – the difference came in matters of administration and finance. Without appropriate childcare, mothers would not be recruited into wartime industry. Nevertheless, mothers did little to fight their cause.

This study considers the inter-relationships between those organisations and how they may have affected the growth of wartime pre-school childcare. Birmingham's

industrial nature dictated that childcare was required earlier than in other parts of the country, which resulted in local officials often pre-empting official guidance as a new and expanding service developed during the emergency conditions of war. How successfully Birmingham officials dealt with the problem of pre-school childcare determined whether wartime contracts could be met by local industries. Able to build on their earlier pre-school education experimentation (Chapter 3), a culture evolved in Birmingham during the Second World War which was influenced by leading Canadian child psychologist Dr William Blatz and his team. By the close of the hostilities, pre-school childcare looked different from that at the outset. Birmingham's innovative practice led to the establishment of the largest number of wartime nurseries by any local authority outside of the London County Council and to the creation of a local pre-school childminding scheme.¹

Previous chapters have considered why the pressures of war necessitated an increase in pre-school childcare in Birmingham, and whether early experimentation in this provision had been successful in laying the foundation for pre-school childcare with the approach of hostilities while establishing what facilities existed by 1939. Within a structure exploring the development of local wartime pre-school childcare this chapter focuses on the effectiveness of the relationships between the different organisations with an interest in this provision.

Standard general histories of education in Britain are of little value as they commonly offer a conventional account of wartime evacuation, before passing swiftly on to the

¹ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

Education Act of 1944 and give little consideration to pre-school childcare or what happened in between. The introduction has explored the literature relevant to industrial wartime production, but they do not provide an insight into the experiences of what was happening in Birmingham. This is crucial in order to understand how the pre-school child of working mothers was cared for during the hostilities.

This chapter is primarily a case study of the many strands of wartime pre-school childcare from a national and local context while considering the effectiveness of the relationships between the different organisations with an interest in this facility and attempts to deal with the third key question: To what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints affected its development? In answering the question, the chapter also considers the extent to which the provision of childcare was negatively affected by the actions or inactions of local or central government.

Central and local government documents were the focus for this study, particularly those held by The National Archives and the Library of Birmingham Archives and Collections. Wartime childminding schemes were a childcare option for the under-fives which were explored early in the hostilities, but little has been written about this. A significant discovery for this research was an unpublished report by Winifred Cavenagh (1908-2004) which outlines the local and national wartime childminding schemes and offers an opportunity to compare both projects.² While carrying out her wartime role as Birmingham's Local Welfare Officer for the Ministry of Labour,

² TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service'; Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954).

Cavenagh developed an awareness of the city's childcare requirements, later advising Sheila Ferguson and Hilde Fitzgerald for their official history.³

This study examines why there was urgency for city officials to pre-empt central guidance. It then goes on to explore, through the interplay of the relevant organisations, the local development of wartime pre-school childcare chronologically. For clarity the different services offered are outlined in Table 4.1.

³ Winifred Cavenagh became a lecturer in social studies at the University of Birmingham in 1946. As a magistrate from the end of the war, she found her academic interests turning towards criminology, especially in relation to the courts, legal procedure and the penal system. She eventually chose to study law and was called to the Bar by Gray's Inn in 1964. By this time her particular interest was in juvenile delinquency. The University of Birmingham gave Cavenagh a personal chair as Professor of Social Administration and Criminology in 1972. *The Birmingham Post*, 'Dr Cavenagh gets university chair' (June 10, 1972), p. 1; *The Times*, *The Register*, 'Professor Winifred Cavenagh' (May 25, 2004), p. 30.

Type of Facility	Description
Day Nursery	Pre-war establishments managed by local public health authorities providing daily care rather than education for pre-school children. Used mainly by mothers of illegitimate babies while they worked or by those unable to care for their child through illness. Babies – five-years.
Nursery Centre	Part of the Government Evacuation Scheme. The objective was to do everything possible for the welfare of children from 2–5 years in order to encourage mothers to leave them in the reception areas. The Ministry of Health was to bear the reasonable approved costs for the establishment and maintenance of the centres with no part of the cost falling upon the Local Authority in the reception area. Parents were only charged if a meal was provided. Nursery centres were eventually replaced by part-time war nurseries.
Wartime Nursery	Established under the management of local public health authorities to deal with children 0–5 years in order to release mothers into the workplace. Whole-time nurseries covered children from a few months to school age. Part-time nurseries covered those 2–5 years.
Nursery School	Whole schools dedicated to the pre-school education of children 2-5 years under the control of the Local Education Authority. During wartime conditions this changed, as will be discussed within this chapter.
Nursery Class	Classes within a primary school and dedicated to the pre-school education of children 2-5 years, again under the management of the LEA. Similarly, as in nursery schools, classes changed during wartime conditions, as will be discussed within this chapter.
Residential or twenty-four-hour nursery	Dedicated to looking after the children of mothers who carried out shift work or worked nights and required rest during the day. Residential nurseries cared for children whole time. Mothers had access to their children on days off. Twenty-four-hour nurseries opened Monday 7am to Saturday 7pm.
Aided Nursery Schools	These were controlled by voluntary organisations and were sometimes eligible for some financial support from the Education Board via their LEA.
Childminding Schemes	National scheme, originally known as the Daily Childminding Scheme but later referred to as the Registered Daily Guardian Scheme. Locally the national scheme was eventually replaced by the city's own scheme. Birmingham's scheme was known as the Children's Home Service. The national scheme was not used nationwide but where it was, it was of limited success.
Personal childcare arrangements	Those made by mothers leaving their children in the care of relatives, neighbours or friends.
Factory Nurseries	Establishments provided by employers – more common in the Lancashire cotton mills. The number of these locally was relatively small.

Table 4.1: Identification of pre-school childcare services ⁴

⁴ Compiled by the author with data taken from TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Below School Age: The Under-Fives; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

Making sense of Birmingham's need to pre-empt official guidance

Childcare facilities were patchy and limited as the hostilities approached, despite attempts by philanthropists, nursery activists and local government to increase pre-school education in the city. Nursery provision had been created by voluntary effort assisted, when possible, by local government. Birmingham nurseries consisted of five LEA and three voluntary establishments, which offered places for approximately 460 children at the beginning of the war. The care of pre-school children was not part of the war cabinet's overall plan. It was assumed that they would be covered by the evacuation scheme. Therefore, at the beginning of the war a national framework for wartime nursery provision did not exist.

Because Birmingham's pre-war unemployment rate was lower than that in most other parts of the country, at the beginning of the war the shortage of manpower became a serious problem for the area sooner than in most cities.⁵ This meant that pre-school childcare was an early issue in the city, before central government acknowledged that any sort of arrangement other than evacuation was required. A Government Evacuation Scheme codenamed 'Pied Piper' was developed during the summer of 1938. The aim was to evacuate civilians from those cities that were at highest risk. In order to organise this, the country was split into three types of areas: Evacuation, Reception and Neutral. Evacuation areas included places such as Greater London, Birmingham and Glasgow. Reception areas were rural in for example Kent, East Anglia and Wales and neutral areas were those where no population change was contemplated. Evacuees were split into four categories, which focused on specific social groups deemed non-essential to war work: school-age children; the infirm; pregnant

⁵ Taylor, A. J. P., *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), p. 413.

women and mothers with babies or pre-school children who would be evacuated together.⁶ Following the mass registration of both evacuees and billeting accommodation, Britain appeared to be ready for the worst.

Over the first three days of official evacuation in September 1939, in England alone 406,000 mothers and young children were relocated. Evacuation was not compulsory and despite propaganda posters which encouraged co-operation, some parents were understandably reluctant to take part.⁷ This was the case in Birmingham where it was reported that the number of evacuated mothers of young children had been so small that by November and December 1939 welfare activities in the city had not been appreciably affected.⁸ Private evacuation, involving individuals choosing to move or send loved ones to relatives or friends to safer locations also took place.

The need for an evacuation scheme was based on concerns for the safety of the vulnerable added to 'fears that bombing would lead to mass hysteria and prevent cities from functioning efficiently'.⁹ Evacuation, Geoffrey Field tells us: 'was framed by officials who had mostly spent their youth in boarding schools'. They 'had no grasp of how working-class families might respond to extended separations' and 'took little account of the precariousness of household economies among the poor' or of the kinship ties within communities.¹⁰ Maggie Andrews suggests the preparation; organisation and monitoring

⁶ 'Evacuation of children during the Second World War' [Online], <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the-evacuation-of-children-during-the-second-world-war/> (Accessed: December 14, 2021).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 151.

⁹ Andrews, M., 'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women: A Domestic Response to a National Problem', *Women's History Review* (June 24, 2014), volume 24, issue 1, pp. 112-130.

¹⁰ Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 9-36.

of the evacuation scheme led to unparalleled public interference into the private space of the home. Not surprisingly, the evacuation quickly exposed a number of problems for example those of cultural differences, of class, the dichotomy of town and country compounded by religious or ethnic factors.¹¹ Many problems were caused by personality clashes between evacuated mothers and children, and their hosts. Some evacuated mothers had been earning their own living which caused financial hardship. However, the main difficulty was that the mother had been put into a new environment away from the freedom and responsibility of their own home. The lack of organisation and objective to her life had disappeared. She was often accepted as a necessity but not welcomed in the billeting household. Following the organised evacuation experiences of mothers with their children in 1939, the practice was suspended by the second movement in 1940.¹² But much of the evacuation's failure was ascribed to the low standards of working class mothers.¹³ Evacuation 'turned into a national debate about the causes of poverty and the culture and standards of the urban working classes' beyond the scope of this study to discuss further.¹⁴ Nationally, despite warnings by the Ministry of Health, nearly half of all evacuees had returned to their homes by Christmas of 1939.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Titmuss, R. M., *History of the Second World War: Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1976), pp. 167-168, pp. 338-339.

¹³ Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁴ 'The most influential investigation of the causes of poverty and the urban environment from which the poorest evacuees came was *Our Towns* produced by the Women's Group on Public Welfare'. 'Ironically, though the original investigation – in the spirit of public responses to the first evacuation – focused on the scale of urban poverty that still existed in England, its long-term influence was in refurbishing and popularizing the concepts of 'problem families''. Ibid.

¹⁵ 'Evacuation of children during the Second World War' [Online], <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the-evacuation-of-children-during-the-second-world-war/> (Accessed: December 14, 2021).

Officials generally assumed that schools including nursery schools or classes would evacuate *en masse*.¹⁶ Some of the older children and staff of Selly Oak Nursery School, Birmingham evacuated to a wing of Avoncroft College, Offenham, Evesham, for a short period. The children appeared to have been content, however administratively and financially it was difficult to manage as not all children were evacuated.¹⁷ Additional staff was required to cover both establishments at a time when there were already workforce shortages. By April 1940 as most of the children were approaching school age arrangements were made to return home.¹⁸

Evacuation did little to alleviate a need for pre-school childcare for working mothers and the toing and froing of evacuees created transient nursery lists. Other important factors which contributed to the transient nursery lists was bomb damage to the home or the movement of mothers working in wartime industry both of which could result in the family relocating to another area of the city. This made it difficult for activists to build their case for wartime nurseries or for officials to recognise there was an actual need.

Due to the earlier experimentation carried out in the city, Birmingham had a small but relatively well-developed system of pre-school childcare in place on which to build. However, local officials had to pre-empt government guidance and as such became a potential model for other authorities. Even when government officials acknowledged that pre-school childcare was required in the industrial cities, permissive power was

¹⁶ Field, G. G., *Blood Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2012), p.10.

¹⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection.

¹⁸ Ibid.

not sufficient to create this service. It took progressive public-spirited authorities to implement such a scheme.

This provision evolved rather than being planned: the success of any major project such as wartime pre-school childcare relied upon a combination of awareness and collaboration between those involved, which was not always forthcoming. Jostling for position took place, particularly between official departments. From the outset of the Second World War, the government rationale for not providing wartime nurseries was based on its belief that mothers wishing to work would continue making private arrangements similar to those that existed before the hostilities. The government failed to appreciate that these arrangements might no longer have been an option. Families, relatives and friends who under normal circumstances supported working mothers of young children could find themselves conscripted into the forces or employment and might benefit from higher wartime wages. Birmingham Council was aware of the situation but lacked government approval to proceed with implementing support. In May 1940, memories of inter-departmental confusion during the First World War led the Ministry of Health to make it clear that if nurseries were required, then the ministry should take responsibility with management by local Maternity and Child Welfare departments.¹⁹ This suggestion was approved; however, the decision resulted in the exclusion of other government departments keen to influence the provision from their perspective. For example, the Ministry of Labour was placed in a position whereby it tried to recruit the mothers of young children into the workforce without being able to offer the incentive of childcare until approved by the Ministry of

¹⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 3.

Health. Similarly, the Education Department was keen to provide an educational element to any wartime nurseries but suspected that the Department of Health's main focus would be on care. Nevertheless, the responsibility for training wartime nursery staff was placed with the Education Department.²⁰ Conversely, the Ministry of Health faced limitations of its own, which were imposed by the Treasury through lack of funding and by creating overcomplicated auditing systems.²¹ Entwined between these official relationships were campaigners pushing for childcare for war workers. Agitators for pre-school childcare during the hostilities were usually those who had contributed towards the establishment of early nursery education and hoped to influence any wartime or future service. They anticipated that the war would be a step towards increasing nursery provision. Industrialists were predominantly interested in encouraging workers into their factories. War workers, as the recipients of any pre-school childcare, played a part in this wartime production. Mothers of pre-school children were not included as part of female conscription. Nevertheless, some were keen to work but unable to do so without sufficient childcare because their pre-war private minding arrangements were collapsing. Not every industrial areas' requirements were synchronous. Some manufacturing districts – Birmingham being one – experienced an early demand for women to work in industry, but nationally, 'as late as June 1940, official unemployment figures stood at 645,000'.²² The need for women workers did not become a pressing issue in government circles until the spring of 1941, neither were there any plans for nurseries in order to help

²⁰ Birmingham wartime nursery nurse recruitment and training is explored in Chapter 8.

²¹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189; TNA, T161/1190-2, Treasury, Correspondence from Mr George, Ministry of Health to Mr Hale, H M Treasury (January 4, 1945).

²² Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

ease the flow of women into industry.²³ Although there was a small expansion of nursery services, mainly in the form of nursery centres for young evacuated children, the first eighteen months of war saw no fundamental changes in national pre-school childcare provision. In Birmingham, matters were different where a high demand for women workers was in evidence early in the war. However, private childminding arrangements did not meet the demands of mothers, and therefore city officials had to put additional childcare arrangements in place before official guidance and funding was available. For a number of reasons (Chapter 2), some mothers would probably have continued to work whether childcare was in place or not. If alternative pre-school childcare was not forthcoming, children could be at risk, at which point officials would ultimately have to take responsibility for their care.

Wartime nursery activism

Government officials largely ignored the working mothers' need for pre-school childcare. Nevertheless during 1940 there was an important addition to the political equation – the emergence of wartime nursery pressure groups which largely consisted of middle-class women. Pressure to provide childcare for working mothers was exerted upon central and local officials from nursery activists, local industry, volunteers offering to set up their own childcare projects, and correspondence campaigns.²⁴ The one area where pressure was not forthcoming was from the mothers of young children themselves.²⁵ In his study of unions in engineering,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ TNA, LAB26/57, Ministry of Labour, Provision for the Care of Children of Married Workers in Industry - War-time Nurseries, General Policy 1940, part 1.

²⁵ A wonderful image is frequently used showing mothers demonstrating for war nurseries in Hampstead, North London, in the spring of 1942 as an example of working-class mothers exerting pressure for more facilities. No similar evidence of working-class mothers demonstrating for this provision in Birmingham has been found to date. Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second*

Richard Croucher suggests that there were few examples of working women pressing for the establishment of day nurseries collectively during the early part of the war.²⁶ If sufficient childcare provision was not available for those women already in employment, how were mothers currently not working to be encouraged into the work place? It is unlikely that these working women had the leisure to initiate a correspondence campaign.²⁷

Croucher suggests that central government officials' opinion was that pre-school childcare was a localised problem, but a large number of women were affected for whom it was a continual worry.²⁸ It is surprising that the women of Birmingham did not take action to encourage local authorities to increase childcare in a speedier fashion as they clearly had experience of activism. The largest rent strike ever seen in Britain took place in the city in 1939, lasting for more than three months.

Demonstrations during that strike were overwhelmingly composed of women. There was a clear victory for the strikers when the council, facing serious financial loss, suspended the rent increase.²⁹ Even if local women did not pressure for nurseries, others in the locality did so on their behalf. Industrial interest was not necessarily in the mother or her child but in retaining the workforce. The management at ICI Kynoch appealed for childcare as the firm experienced a particularly high wastage of female labour. Women felt unable to leave their children at night, which led to

World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict (Kent, 1984), p. 78. The original image can be found in *Picture Post* (June 6, 1942).

²⁶ Croucher, R., 'Communist Politics and Shop Stewards in Engineering, 1935-1946', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Warwick, 1977), pp. 125-128.

²⁷ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 6.

²⁸ Croucher, R., 'Communist Politics and Shop Stewards in Engineering, 1935-1946', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Warwick, 1977), pp. 125-128.

²⁹ Morton, B., 'Striking for Fair Rents', *West Midlands History* (2014), volume 2, issue 4, pp. 20-21.

requests to provide night nurseries as early as June 18, 1940.³⁰ Around the same time local women's groups, including branches of the Women's Co-operative Guild and Birmingham and Midlands Association of University Women, carried out a correspondence campaign. They wrote to the Ministry of Health, demanding nursery provision in their area.³¹ A pressure group, the Birmingham Day Nursery Campaign Committee (BDNCC), was formed in the summer of 1940.³² The secretary of the committee was Dr Mary Barrow, a doctor with a large practice amongst poor working women, the remainder of the membership is not known, but was probably represented by the middle classes as it comprised doctors and schoolteachers.³³ Meetings were held to stir up support, and they sent resolutions to the City Council and the Ministry of Health.³⁴ Correspondence from these groups, whether to officials or the local press, did not seem to have a great impact. Ministry of Labour officials suggested: 'There cannot at any time however, be said to have been anything like a press campaign as far as local newspapers are concerned.'³⁵ The ministry declared that correspondence received from activists at no time 'reached more than a very thin trickle'.³⁶ Nevertheless, by January 1942, the continued lack of nursery provision was becoming a joke in the national press (Figure 4.1).

³⁰ TNA, LAB26/57, Ministry of Labour, Provision for the Care of Children of Married Workers in Industry - War-time Nurseries, General Policy 1940, part 1.

³¹ TNA, MH55/695, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Arrangement for Provision, Correspondence (February-December 1940).

³² TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 11.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.



Figure 4.1: 'And the sooner they build their blessed nurseries the better' ³⁷

A partial wartime nursery policy

Partial state responsibility began to ease the blockage experienced locally but did little to create collaborative relationships between the interested parties. Progress was slow and any provision locally was reliant upon Birmingham Council's willingness to pre-empt official guidance. In June 1940, the Ministry of Health submitted a new proposal to the Treasury, which received approval.³⁸ By October 1940, the first wartime nurseries were opened in Birmingham using child welfare centres which could be easily adapted.³⁹ Welfare authorities in areas where the Ministry of Labour reported an actual or potential shortage of women workers, such

³⁷ British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent, Niebour, Ronald., *Daily Mail*, NEB1291 'And the sooner they build their blessed nurseries the better' (January 22, 1942)' [Online], <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk> (Accessed: September 12, 2015). ©dmg media licensing.

³⁸ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

³⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', pp. 16-17.

as in Birmingham, were advised that they should speedily set up one or more day nurseries. The capital cost of these nurseries was to be covered by the Exchequer which would also contribute one shilling per day for each child who attended. This nursery provision could be entrusted to a voluntary agency if the local authorities preferred, 'but local Medical Officers of Health were, in all cases to be responsible for [the] general supervision'. There were few standards set for premises, equipment or staffing at that stage.⁴⁰ Each local authority's response to the Ministry of Health's proposal differed. Some authorities, such as Birmingham, felt no reticence about increasing their nursery welfare provision as their maternity and child welfare services were already well advanced. Others were clear that despite the improved financial support, the help was still not adequate, leaving any shortfall to be met by council rates. Nurseries were provided as part of a national policy so therefore it was hardly fair to call on citizens to fund part of the cost, merely because the factories needing women happened to be in their areas.⁴¹

The potential need or demand for wartime nurseries was grossly underestimated by the Ministry of Health.⁴² In June 1940, it had referred to 'one or more day nurseries' as being necessary in each area.⁴³ Clearly, there appeared to be a demand because during 1940 there were 85,000 children in Birmingham under five years of age, of whom approximately 50,000 were between two and five.⁴⁴ One wartime day nursery was never going to be sufficient to meet requirements. Therefore, the supply of

⁴⁰ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴² Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 152.

⁴³ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 2.

⁴⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945.

wartime day nurseries depended on the foresight, politics and economics of local councils. This was particularly difficult for the overburdened local councils in the major industrial target areas such as Birmingham.⁴⁵

Locally, the Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee was prepared to support the fullest provision of wartime nurseries which funding would allow. Birmingham's child welfare service was highly developed, a fact that helped to deal with the rapid growth of its wartime nurseries.⁴⁶ To save time, the Committee used either part of buildings already in use as children's welfare clinics, or set up nurseries near to those establishments to enable facilities to be shared. This was not an ideal solution to the problem because other services would be displaced and rehoused elsewhere, but it would enable the Committee to establish nurseries quickly.⁴⁷ Some adaptation to the buildings was required and air raid shelters had to be provided, but by August 23, 1940, eight-day nurseries had been formally approved but were not yet fully operational. The nurseries were very expensive to staff and organise and the Ministry of Health was still not convinced that the demand was real. However, central public health officials thought that Birmingham would be useful in demonstrating whether the demand was there.⁴⁸ By October 1940, the first seven wartime nurseries were open in the city.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Mass Observation, *People in Production: An Enquiry into British War Production* (Harmondsworth, 1942), p. 152.

⁴⁶ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 3.

⁴⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1940).

⁴⁸ TNA, MH55/695, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Arrangement for Provision, Correspondence (February-December 1940).

⁴⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries',

Conflict occurs when different groups have competing goals, particularly in the early stages of a process. Locally, the relationship between the various official organisations created difficulties. Representatives from the local Maternity and Child Welfare Committee were conspicuously absent from one LEA meeting, but whether they were invited is unclear. When summarising this meeting Mr Arnold, the local H M Inspector of Schools, described how 'Again and again during the discussion we came up against the same difficulty – that of attempting to make plans to meet a demand of which nobody knew the size or the nature'.⁵⁰ Ministry of Labour officials were unable to provide detailed information about the areas thought to urgently require nurseries. They considered that this was something the LEA should investigate and then meet the demand. Conversely, the LEA thought that responsibility lay with the local labour department. The Ministry of Information was rather more helpful in naming some residential areas where women could work if their children were cared for. Arnold thought that planning and providing wartime nurseries in Birmingham on the scale required at the speed necessary was a complicated full-time job. As of October 1941, it was the 'part-time concern of two Government Departments and two Local Authority Departments'.⁵¹ Even though Birmingham LEA was keen to help alleviate the wartime pre-school childcare problem, the local Maternity and Child Welfare Committee ignored the LEA's existence and excluded it from any discussions. In an effort to inspect the premises following the opening of the first eight wartime nurseries, H M Inspector Arnold 'gate-crashed' his way into the nurseries before reporting his views on them to the Deputy

p. 17.

⁵⁰ TNA, ED66/108, Report of Mr F Arnold on conference held at Birmingham Education Office (November 3, 1941).

⁵¹ Ibid.

Minister of Health. Eventually, he managed to build a relationship with the local Maternity and Child Welfare Committee but his suggestion that it might be desirable for them to co-operate with the LEA was ignored. Similarly, his offer that the LEA could run Child Care Reserve (CCR) courses was 'answered with a very decided 'No'.⁵² Lack of central official guidance from the outset had created this difficult situation. Whether this relationship improved once guidance was provided is unclear; however, evidence to date suggests that it did. Arnold's relationship with William Blatz discussed in the following two chapters seems to have been less challenging. Blatz described Arnold as the Garrison Lane project's 'fairy god-father'.⁵³

It was improbable that Birmingham LEA would do anything, which might be interpreted as encouraging mothers to work; however, the LEA wanted to assist in protecting the pre-school child. Even though the LEA was frustrated at its exclusion from wartime nursery planning by the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, it did provide nursery places within its schools.⁵⁴ Schools or public houses were the most suitable buildings for conversion into nurseries on the housing estates where care was most urgently required. With its previous experience of nursery education, Birmingham's local Education Department worked towards easing the childcare situation. Alongside the establishment of wartime nurseries by Birmingham Public Health's Maternity and Child Welfare Department, the LEA explored ways to increase places for the under-fives in its schools. Nationally, by the beginning of the Second

⁵² TNA, ED66/108, Board of Education, Birmingham C.E., Provision for the care of Children of War-workers (December 9, 1941).

⁵³ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

⁵⁴ TNA, ED66/108, Report of Mr F Arnold on conference held at Birmingham Education Office (November 3, 1941).

World War, there were one hundred and fifteen nursery schools with places for about 9,500 children. Approximately half of these were run by local authorities with little prospect of more being added.⁵⁵ Places for the pre-school child available in Birmingham in either LEA- maintained nursery schools or classes or voluntary nursery schools totalled four hundred and six.⁵⁶ As the situation stood, if the number of working mothers in the city was to be increased, the available pre-school childcare did not meet the wartime demands. Local Education Committee minutes displayed a keenness to put wartime ideas and plans in motion but Central Government's reluctance to offer guidance or funding was delaying the process.⁵⁷ Without guaranteed commitment to fund nursery schools and classes, any shortfall would have to be found from the local rates. As the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education joint circular was not issued until May 1941, the LEA found that its inability to fund this provision delayed any prospect of increasing wartime pre-school facilities in the city.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, mothers already in the workplace were struggling to find suitable care for their children. Even so, by April 23 1942 Birmingham LEA had provided 190 nursery schools or classes for children under five to attend; this number increased to 196 by July 1944.⁵⁹

There was little dialogue with mothers to determine their need for childcare or how it could benefit them. Unfamiliar with wartime nurseries, women had to be convinced

⁵⁵ Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), p. 4.

⁵⁶ Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), pp. 275-278.

⁵⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945 (November 20, December 15, 1941).

⁵⁸ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Joint circular 2388 Ministry of Health and 1553 Board of Education, War-time nurseries for the care of children under five years of age (May 31, 1941).

⁵⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1939).

of the benefits. This lack of use was interpreted by opponents to suggest that pre-school childcare was not required. Even in parts of Birmingham where factories were filling up with workers, new nurseries sometimes got off to a slow start. Little consultation appears to have taken place with working mothers, the prospective users of this service. While District Councils had been asked to carry out their own enquiries between May and August 1940, most did not ask the mothers but instead consulted their employers who – because of their reluctance to employ married women – frequently stated that there was no demand for nurseries. Following the consultation, however, the Midlands was one of the areas identified as being in urgent need of nurseries along with the North Midlands, Scotland and the North-west.⁶⁰ The slow take-up of nursery places by mothers could have been for a variety of reasons: a spell of bad weather, concerns about their child picking up infections, or the travelling distances to their nearest establishment. Occasionally, there was an unexpected tendency for mothers to wait and see how the service worked for others before changing their arrangements.⁶¹ However, this period soon passed, with too few nurseries and long waiting lists becoming the rule, as more women took up employment.⁶²

Justification for pre-school childcare was a continuing battle throughout the hostilities for all parties, whether they were activists or officials. In December 1940, the Birmingham Medical Women's Association and BDNCC urged the Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee that wartime nurseries should be set up in all

⁶⁰ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), p. 76.

⁶¹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 185.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

parts of the city.⁶³ With the initial reluctance of mothers to use nurseries, it was going to be difficult for campaigners to justify any need to increase this service. Local officials were criticised, stating that they had made little attempt to advertise these nurseries or to encourage women to make use of them. In their defence, local officials believed that Welfare Centres were by far the most effective channel to pass on this information because they were in touch with about eighty-five per cent of the children and their mothers in the city. Even so, the Ministry of Labour arranged for the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) to distribute leaflets at those local shopping centres most likely to be frequented by women working in factories who might wish to leave their children at wartime nurseries.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Ministry of Labour suggested that Welfare Centres were resisting the efforts of mothers to obtain information because they were 'against' the nurseries. However, research to date has not revealed evidence to substantiate this.⁶⁵ In an effort to publicise the availability of this new wartime facility to mothers, the Lady Mayoress was invited to visit a local nursery.⁶⁶

Pressure was directed towards central and local government officials to provide nurseries for working mothers, but the effectiveness of this activity is questionable. It was hardly possible to attend meetings of any Birmingham women's societies without

⁶³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1940).

⁶⁴ WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018) (May-June, 1943).

⁶⁵ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 13.

⁶⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, (December 13, 1940); *The Birmingham Mail*, 'Day Nurseries' (December 13, 1940), p. 5.

hearing the advocacy of nurseries.⁶⁷ The BDNCC held meetings to rouse support, sending resolutions to the City Council and the Ministry of Health.⁶⁸ Surprisingly, considering that the aims of the BDNCC were similar to those of the local Maternity and Child Welfare Authority led by Dr Ethel Cassie, their relationship was strained. The Campaign Committee believed that Cassie 'did not wish their co-operation'. In Dr Cassie's defence, she did try to involve them. The Campaign Committee's suggestion that hundreds of nurseries should be provided was considered by government officials to be 'quite irresponsible'. These same officials suggested that if premises 'could be found for 200 nurseries 16,000 people would be needed on the staffs if 40 children were accommodated in each', giving a staffing ratio of two per child.⁶⁹ The officials' statistics only make sense if they were including the additional maintenance, cleaning and cooking staff required to run the nurseries. A Birmingham welfare officer argued that when questioned, this group was unable to substantiate its urgent requests for more nurseries with evidence.⁷⁰ Regional Medical Officer, Dr Gorrie tried to 'canalize their energies in the right direction' by suggesting that they find volunteers to work in the nurseries or put forward suggestions of suitable buildings for adaptation.⁷¹ Instead, they preferred to conduct a correspondence campaign with officials such as Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of

⁶⁷ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 32.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Correspondence Mr Lindsay (October 4, 1941).

⁷⁰ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 11.

⁷¹ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Correspondence from T. Lindsay, Ministry of Health Whitehall to Mr Plummer at its Birmingham office (October 21, 1941).

Supply, Lloyd George or Sir Peter Bennett, MP for Birmingham.⁷² However well intended, their efforts were counterproductive. This committee gained a reputation within central official circles of 'busying itself in teaching the Birmingham Town Council its work'.⁷³ Government officials supported the council, considering that this 'of all towns [Birmingham] has been the most enterprising and the most helpful' and did not take this group's accusations seriously, referring to it as a 'gingering committee'.⁷⁴

On a national level, there was a stalemate. On one side, the Ministry of Labour, was concerned that the lack of nurseries or their high costs would block the flow of women into the factories, but on the other, local authorities protested against the heavy and increasing charges likely to fall on their ratepayers. By January 1941, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour foresaw that the supply of single women for industry would soon be exhausted, and the employment of married women would become essential. He realised that the state had become responsible for the provision of facilities for the care of children and recognised the importance of organising nurseries in such a way as to make them meet the present needs.⁷⁵ The Ministry's interest in the workers' children was not directly in the children *per se* but in their being the potential barrier to the flow of women towards war-work. Likewise, the Ministry was concerned about the potential influence of the lack of childcare on the morale of working mothers or of fathers in the forces. Through its welfare

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 'Gingering Committee' refers to a group of people who aim to 'ginger up' others. The best-known early use of this is the UK 'Liberal War Committee', established in January 1916, the '*Ginger Group*' of Liberals who helped Lloyd George to become Prime Minister. The Phrase Finder [Online], <http://www.phrases.org.uk> (Accessed: September 5, 2016).

⁷⁵ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 186.

department, the Ministry brought pressure to bear on the appropriate authorities to recognise and meet these needs.⁷⁶ Initially, this pressure did not accelerate the progress of nurseries, but a structure began to emerge.

The turning point in wartime nursery policy

Wartime nursery provision began to increase once there was a move towards full government responsibility. As the lack of workforce became more serious, central officials sought the expertise of voluntary organisations. Nationally, towards the end of April 1941 when the Ministry of Labour and industrialists experienced a desperate shortage of workers, local welfare officials under the central control of the Ministry of Health were empowered to set up wartime nurseries. It was at this point that 'the good-will and the valuable experience of the interested voluntary organisations were enlisted and an informal committee of prominent members of these societies was set up'.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that they instigated this collaboration, there was still a tendency to treat these women with derision: the Ministry patronisingly referred to this group as the 'Peeresses Committee'.⁷⁸ May 1941 was a turning point in wartime nursery policy. In the words of Ferguson and Fitzgerald: 'A national need was at last receiving treatment on a national basis.'⁷⁹ Correspondence from the Minister of Labour and National Service to the Minister of Health advised that 'there was an urgent necessity for the immediate recruitment of large number[s] of women not

⁷⁶ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 1.

⁷⁷ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

already engaged in industry.’⁸⁰ The letter made it clear that ‘satisfactory arrangements must be made for the care of children during working hours.’⁸¹ Without such arrangements, there would be a serious loss of efficiency and absenteeism as women would not feel able to leave their children in order to work.⁸² On May 31, 1941 a joint circular was issued by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education, which set out new arrangements for young children in nurseries.⁸³ The circular stressed that wartime nurseries should now be regarded as a war facility for both evacuated children and for the children of women in employment.⁸⁴ This provision could be made wherever necessary in all types of areas, whether evacuation, neutral or reception, and the net approved expenditure of the Council would be reimbursed from national funding.⁸⁵ It was at this point that nursery centres began to diminish. With the cessation of intensive bombing, many mothers with young children returned to their homes and took up work.

Control and responsibility lay firmly in the hands of the Ministry of Health for the entire management of the projected wartime nurseries. Two types of care were suggested. A whole-time nursery would provide full day-time care for children from a few months old up to school age. This served women in full-time employment and opened for twelve to fifteen hours a day. Meals, milk and the opportunity for regular sleeps and baths were provided for children. The nursery, under the direction of a

⁸⁰ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 6.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Joint circular 2388 Ministry of Health and 1553 Board of Education, War-time nurseries for the care of children under five years of age (May 31, 1941).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

matron, would have either a nursery school teacher, or child care reservist appointed as a concession to the educationalists, to supervise activities for the older children. A part-time nursery, broadly a development of the nursery centre, was the second part of the plan and was to open during ordinary school hours. This mainly catered for children aged two to five years. These establishments, run by a teacher, were especially suitable for evacuated children or those whose mothers worked part-time.⁸⁶ Wartime nurseries were intended to supplement any day nurseries, nursery schools and classes or voluntary nursery schools already in existence. Pre-school childcare finally began to increase although it was clear from the outset that wartime nurseries were of a temporary nature. The charge to employed mothers was one shilling for a full day, which included meals, or three pence a day in part-time nurseries which increased to six pence a day if lunch was provided.⁸⁷ This payment may have been a contributing factor to the initial delays by Birmingham mothers registering their children into wartime nursery places. Mothers of children attending nursery schools or classes only paid if children received a meal.

In reality, the government continued to believe that women would make their own private arrangements for the care of their children. It was at this point that a National Childminding Scheme was launched (Figure 4.2) in an attempt to supplement wartime nursery provision, which by November 1941, officials labelled as unsuccessful.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Riley, D., *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London, 1983), p. 117.

Caring for war workers' children is a national service

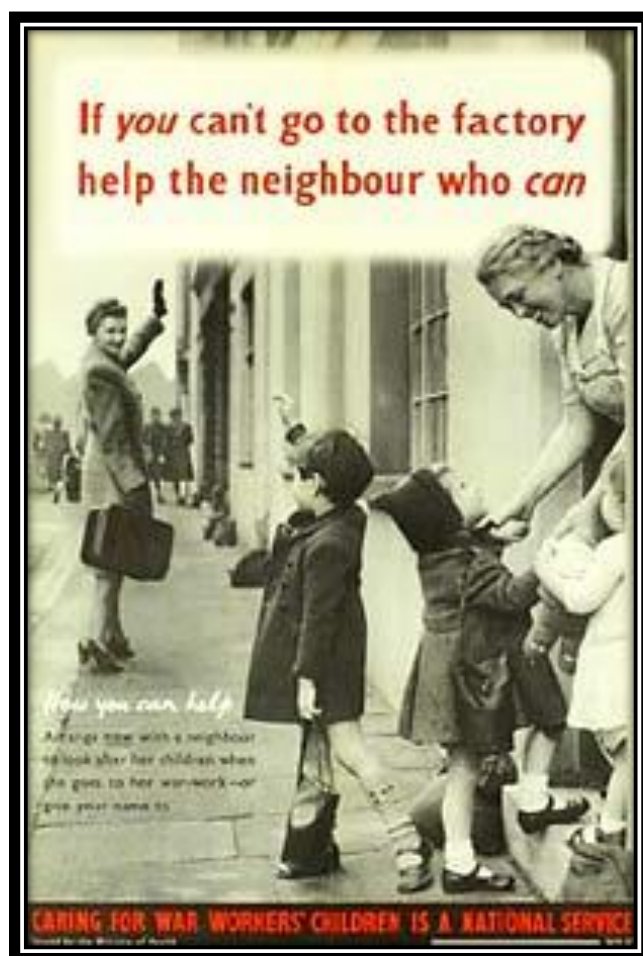


Figure 4.2: Second World War childminding promotion poster (c.1941)⁸⁹

Attempts by Birmingham officials to regulate private childminding in their region had been unsuccessful and by the Second World War, it remained unregulated. Mothers and childminders agreed their own terms and conditions. Any change to the status quo was likely to place childminders under the watchful eye of the local government and put their livelihood at risk. If wartime official schemes were to succeed they needed to emulate the private arrangements. The first national minding arrangement, originally known as the 'Daily Child Minding Scheme', but later referred

⁸⁹ IWM, Art.IWM PST 21505, If you can't go to the factory help the neighbour who can [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: February 9, 2016), © Art.IWM PST 21505.

to as the 'Registered Daily Guardian Scheme', was introduced on June 23, 1941.⁹⁰ Despite optimism by central officials, the scheme was never a great success. Financial incentives were the main drawback for minders but the complex registration to the scheme and its time-consuming governance locally did not help. It offered prospective minders a worse arrangement than was already unofficially taking place locally. Although regarded as a national scheme, only a few towns were expected to use it, and Birmingham was one.⁹¹ In contrast, 'Birmingham Children's Home Service' scheme, which replaced it on December 1, 1941, was a little more successful; nevertheless, it failed to reach the numbers anticipated. Local officials challenged the proposed national scheme by offering constructive criticism based on their experience of the unofficial minding already taking place in the area, but it was ignored.⁹² Convinced that it was unworkable, Birmingham officials tried to circumvent the national scheme, but eventually agreed to carry out a short trial. Ministry of Labour policy was to encourage the provision of nurseries and only in special circumstances was this temporary childminding scheme to be implemented.⁹³ However, until the Ministry of Health was convinced that wartime nurseries were needed, an alternative form of pre-school childcare was required. Local official minutes continued to note the scheme as impracticable due to the limitations imposed and proposed dropping it.⁹⁴ Reluctantly, the local authority agreed to continue the trial for a little longer. By July 16, 1941, only thirty applications had

⁹⁰ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018) 1941. To reduce confusion from this point on the national scheme will be referred to as the Registered Daily Guardian Scheme.

⁹¹ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), pp. 88-89.

⁹² TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 18, 1941).

materialised out of one hundred and forty-two enquiries to become minders after the terms and conditions had been explained.⁹⁵ The majority of these thirty had already been minding for satisfactory payment and enquiries revealed that the response would be better if the conditions were more reasonable.⁹⁶ The position was not much improved by September when out of 264 enquiries only 100 applicants had even returned their forms.⁹⁷ Birmingham officials were allowed to create their own scheme, which was put into operation in December 1941 and remained in place until the end of the war.⁹⁸ Appendix 3 provides an analysis of the two schemes. The local scheme must have been more acceptable to mothers and minders because 'within three months 382 children had been placed and by September 1942, the figure reached 1,334, settling at about 1,100'.⁹⁹ Birmingham's Local Welfare Officer for the Ministry of Labour, Winifred Cavenagh, considered that the childminding scheme was not significantly affected by the opening of day nurseries.¹⁰⁰

In terms of releasing women into the workplace, it is probable that structured childminding locally contributed towards relieving some of the blockages, as did the nurseries. The official schemes fell short of replacing the 159,000 private minding arrangements estimated to be taking place in 1943, which were preferred by mothers and minders. The Birmingham Children's Home Service scheme had its own shortcomings, which officials identified in case a demand for this facility should arise

⁹⁵ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 202; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 6.

again (appendix 3). However, the local scheme's greatest contribution was to aid the welfare of the child by bringing the care of these children under the eye of the Child Welfare Department.¹⁰¹ Previous attempts to do this by local officials had been unsuccessful. Official childminding schemes had failed to satisfy the demand of those mothers with pre-school children wishing to work. The schemes, impeded by the reluctance of support by minders or mothers, ensured that the official focus returned to nursery provision and its organisation.

The move towards a more structured and collaborative approach

More than two years after the outbreak of the Second World War, central official perception of how much wartime pre-school childcare was required was still unrealistic. The Department of Health sanctioned schemes, supervised plans or approved adaptations to existing buildings and supplied specially adapted prefabricated huts where suitable buildings were unprocurable. This same department determined the staffing qualifications, salaries and grading of the nursing or domestic staff, and funded them. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the building, equipping and staffing of wartime nurseries. From June 1941, the rate of nursery provision accelerated greatly as the Exchequer accepted responsibility for the whole cost of maintenance, less the mothers' contribution.¹⁰²

There was a move towards a more collaborative effort by central government.

Arrangements were made for joint staff from the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education to facilitate the central administration of wartime nursery provision, which

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹⁰² Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), pp. 6-7.

was based at the Ministry of Health, Whitehall. They were to liaise with the Ministry of Health's regional staff and H M Inspectors of Schools.¹⁰³ The Ministry of Health and the Board of Education drew up a joint circular, advised by a group of women whose experience and interest lay with young children.¹⁰⁴ The Marchioness of Reading, Lady Galway, Lady Allen, Mrs Carton, Miss Johnston and Mrs Rupert Scott were among those serving on this small Committee.¹⁰⁵ Lady Reading features strongly in the establishment of local wartime nurseries. Five regional childcare advisors were appointed to help in those parts of the country, including Birmingham, where married women with young children were most likely to be employed.¹⁰⁶

On a national level, the speed at which nursery provision progressed from May to November 1941 provides an indication of the pent-up demand for this facility. By the end of that six-month period '194 war-time nurseries were open, 209 were approved, but not yet ready, and another 284 were in active preparation'.¹⁰⁷ Once all of these nurseries became operational, approximately 13,200 children could be cared for

¹⁰³ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health 2585 and Board of Education 1573 joint circular (December 5, 1941).

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 7. In all probability, these ladies were the 'Peeresses' although this has not been possible to confirm.

¹⁰⁶ Midland Region, The Marchioness of Reading, Chairman of the Council of the National Society of Day Nurseries. North-western Region, Lady Openshaw, Vice-Chairman of the Midwives, Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of the Lancashire County Council and member of the WVS Under-fives committee. Southern Region, Mrs Eva M Hubback, M.A., J.P., Chairman of the Under-fives Sub-Committee of the Women's Group on Public Affairs and member of the WVS Under-fives Committee. Northern Region, Mrs F Todd, Deputy County Administrator (County of Durham) of the WVS. In London Mr H V Willink, Regional Commissioner for the Care of the Homeless, undertook the general supervision of this work. TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Minding the children' (February 26, 1942), p. 241; Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p.188 note 2. Marquis is a title of nobility that ranks between a Duke and Earl. Marchioness is a title given to the wife or widow of a marquis. Elite titles, 'Marquis and Marchioness' [Online], <http://www.elitetitles.co.uk> (Accessed: May 2, 2020).

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 181-189.

during the working day.¹⁰⁸ The influence of a 100% grant to local authorities had probably helped to free the blockage. However, if the total workforce needed nationally was considered alongside the number of these mothers who required pre-school childcare, the numbers still fell a long way short. Concerns about the lack of nurseries were still being raised in December 1941 by Lord Nathan who stated: 'The whole of the provision, so far as is known to the public, to be in contemplation by His Majesty's Government for war-time nurseries would be fully absorbed by the City of Birmingham alone.'¹⁰⁹ Nationally estimates fell short of actual requirements.

Instead of the wartime growth promoting future nursery education, there was concern that it might in fact be detrimental to the cause. The name 'wartime nursery' suggests a service which can become a combination of a day nursery and a nursery school able to cater for children from one month to five years.¹¹⁰ This combination was bound to raise criticism from champions of day nurseries or nursery schools since they did not emphasise the same ends or purposes. The former ensured that children under two were fed, clothed, amused and protected by nurses, who were mainly concerned with their health and well-being. Children from two to five attending nursery school were additionally trained in self-reliance, self-confidence, and acquired a sense of community. In other words, they learned to fend for themselves while considering the feelings and respecting the rights of others in a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁰⁹ House of Lords debate, volume 121, cc 223-33, War-time nurseries (December 9, 1941). Lord Nathan, Labour member for Central Wandsworth, was a pioneer in welfare work. With the approval of the authorities, Lord Nathan built up the Army Welfare Service to help soldiers with their home problems. Goodhart, A. L., 'Nathan, Harry Louis, first Baron Nathan (1889-1963)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: January 15, 2008).

¹¹⁰ Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), pp. 5-6.

secure surrounding.¹¹¹ At first then it would appear that the introduction of the wartime nurseries scheme in 1941 was a decisive victory for the day nursery.¹¹² Although educational provision for older children was recommended, it was clearly only a secondary consideration for the Ministry of Health and the Maternity and Child Welfare Authorities, which were now in charge of the scheme.¹¹³ Supporters of the nursery school, such as Viscountess Astor, described the scheme as a 'retrograde step' to the movement for nursery education.¹¹⁴ They feared that if unchallenged, the Ministry might have concentrated on the physical well-being in these nurseries, thus sacrificing more than twenty-five years of campaigning for educating this age group.¹¹⁵

Even though the overall responsibility for wartime nurseries lay with the Ministry of Health, because wartime pre-school childcare transcended so many official departments, there were bound to be delays. Blame was sometimes laid at the door of local authorities, and they in turn complained of delays in their plans being approved centrally.¹¹⁶ Recognition by the Ministry of Health that a demand for wartime nurseries existed did not guarantee the full support of its representatives. One official, Miss Smieton, preferred the childminding option over nurseries. She felt that married women with young children should not be encouraged to work and

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹¹² Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 197.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Nancy Astor was the first woman to sit as an MP in the House of Commons. Brehony, K. F., 'Lady Astor's Campaign for Nursery Schools in Britain, 1930-1939: Attempting to Valorize Cultural Capital in a Male-Dominated Political Field', *History of Education Quarterly* (May, 2009), Volume 49, No 2, pp. 196-210.

¹¹⁵ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 197.

¹¹⁶ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World* (January 29, 1942), p. 153.

therefore nurseries should only be used as a last resort.¹¹⁷ Smieton considered that given the high nursery staffing ratios required to release women for war-work, mothers of pre-school children could never make a large contribution to the labour supply. Summerfield suggests that the age and status of those employed in nurseries meant that they would probably not have gone into factory or manual work themselves; so in fact every woman released to work due to the nursery worker was a real gain to industry.¹¹⁸ Chapter 8 attempts to quantify the local economic value of pre-school childcare against the number of mothers released for industrial war-work.

Nationally, hostility and delays to the establishment of nurseries came particularly from local medical officers of health. Central officials turned to them to establish if a nursery was required. Medical officers frequently claimed that they had looked for a demand for nursery places and had found none. Ministry of Labour officials were convinced that medical officers were manipulating evidence of demand for nurseries to suit their own views that mothers should remain at home to care for their children. Summerfield suggests that the constant discussion as to whether demand was real by some of these officials was a deliberate obstruction.¹¹⁹ To support their view that women generally did not want nurseries, medical officers sometimes interpreted the slow take-up of places in some areas as underuse in order to justify closing them.¹²⁰ Conversely, the Ministry of Labour felt that demand was underestimated because employment practice and family habits in relation to nursery opening hours had not been taken into account. The department considered that if nurseries were well

¹¹⁷ Miss Smieton, Ministry of Health, had considerable influence on nursery policy by 1941. Summerfield, P., 'Women, Work and Welfare: A Study of Child Care and Shopping in Britain in the Second World War', *Journal of Social History* (1983), volume 17, issue 2, pp. 249-269.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. The possible reasons for underuse are discussed on page 147.

publicised, with opening hours appropriate to the mothers' needs, and were accessible to all and not just munition workers, then they would soon fill.¹²¹ Locally, Dr H P Newcombe, Medical Officer of Health, and Dr Ethel Cassie, Senior Assistant Medical Officer of Health for Maternity and Child Welfare, strongly supported nursery provision. Dr Jean Mackintosh replaced Dr Cassie when the latter retired due to ill health in March 1943 and continued in the same manner.

From the outset of war, central officials evaded making any decision to provide pre-school childcare, presuming that the problem would disappear. Two years after the outbreak of war, debate continued regarding whether there was an actual demand for nurseries. Following one such debate in *The Times*, one gentleman became frustrated and contacted the Ministry of Health, writing: 'The correspondence columns of *The Times* suggest to me that it is time to "cut the cackle" and make it some one person's job to "mind the chicks" and speed up those nurseries which are overdue'.¹²² Locally around this time, *The Birmingham Mail* published correspondence from a group referring to itself as 'working women' who accused officials of 'Chewing the cud' in relation to the establishment of nurseries, stating how:

The Ministry of Information has descended upon the city and gone for us women like a bull at a gate. Posters cover the town like a swarm of locusts. Baggy-trousered, anxious looking men have appealed to us from the cinema. We are ready! Hitler is no friend of ours! Unfortunately the energy of the Ministry of Information and the figurative bull is not initiated by his female partner the Ministry of Health. Here we are, after two years of war, still wanting nurseries to put our kids in – and those we might have! But the cow still sits and chews the cud in the Health Departments of this country, during the greatest war in history.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² TNA, MH55/884, Ministry of Health, Children of War-workers: Day Nurseries, 1941-1942.

We are prepared to play our part in the defence of this country if the Health Departments will play theirs, and come forward quickly with enough nurseries, day and residential, in which we can safely leave our children while we do our 60 hours in industry. Surely this is little enough to ask of departments where many women are putting in their 40 hours, many of whom have no family cares at all. Can the bull twist the cow's tail?¹²³

The authenticity of this communication must have raised concerns with the editors of *The Birmingham Mail* because they specified that individuals had signed it. They presumably suspected that the correspondence was not sent by working mothers. The language resembles an educated middle- and upper-class perspective trying to put forward a working-class position. The editors were probably justified in questioning the authors of this correspondence. Meanwhile, Birmingham industry could not afford to wait. Local officials appointed a wartime nursery organising secretary, Mr A D Edmunds, at the end of 1941, who was based in the city and responsible for increasing nurseries in Civil Defence Area 9 which covered the Midlands.¹²⁴ Once Edmunds was appointed, nursery provision quickly began to increase, probably helped by the project finally having one local co-ordinator, but this was still not quick enough for those industries with insatiable appetites for women workers, leaving some with no alternative but to take action themselves.

Factory nurseries

Industry played a dual role in some parts of the country – acting as both employer and provider of childcare. Responsibility for nurseries during the First World War lay mainly with those manufacturers employing women. Air combat ensured that the

¹²³ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Too Few Nurseries' (October 9, 1941), p. 3.

¹²⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (January 21, 1942).

Second World War was to be different.¹²⁵ In a few cases, manufacturers established their own nurseries within a factory, an arrangement for which there were advantages and disadvantages. Mothers probably felt an added sense of security knowing that their children were close if they were required because of illness or perhaps that a short visit was possible during breaks in the long working day. Travelling time was reduced if the mother and child were going in the same direction. Public transport pressures which were a problem in the city could also be reduced.¹²⁶ At the same time, factory nurseries were discouraged by officials who were keen to keep nursery provision as far away from industry as possible because daylight air raids targeted factories and surrounding buildings.¹²⁷ However, since most working mothers lived close to their workplace it was impractical to place nurseries away from industry. Ministry of Health officials were also concerned that less scrupulous employers might adopt low standards, which would lead to a greater risk of infection. This deterred the Ministry from actively encouraging any large-scale development of factory nurseries although in some instances it paid grants to manufacturers.¹²⁸

Nationally, the establishment of day-nurseries provided by employers was relatively small. There were about forty nurseries with places for about 1,500 children, compared with 900 nurseries provided by the welfare authorities with places for 44,000 children.¹²⁹ With few exceptions, most factory nurseries established since

¹²⁵ Ibid., LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, Report of the Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee (April 19, 1941).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 190.

¹²⁹ TNA, MH55/1673, Ministry of Health, Recruitment of Women in Industry, Care of their Children in Nurseries.

1939 were mainly in connection with the Lancashire cotton mills.¹³⁰ Locally, research to date has only revealed two factory nurseries in operation during the Second World War, one at Fort Dunlop (opened November 1941), and another at Morris Commercial Cars Limited (opened circa 1942).¹³¹ If central officials did not feel that nurseries within the workplace were appropriate for this war, their delay in preparing a national plan did little to offer alternative options for working mothers. The relationship between local officials and these factory nurseries is unclear, but collaboration existed, as revealed in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.4). Women interested in working in the factory and using the nursery facilities at Fort Dunlop were encouraged to apply to their nearest Labour Exchange or the Employment Department at the factory.¹³²

Evidence to date has not revealed any documented concerns about this type of establishment in Birmingham; however, at the end of the Second World War local officials pressed for a wartime nursery accommodation policy. They were keen to have some measure of control over the establishment of private day-nurseries or crèches opened by industrial firms or individuals.¹³³ By implication, this suggests that they may have experienced some shortcomings, a view supported by the Ministry of Health, which considered that 'It is possible that Birmingham had discovered some

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*, 'Birmingham's First Factory Nursery' (November 26, 1941), p. 4; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 19, 1942).

¹³² *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Mothers of Birmingham' (November 25, 1941), p. 2.

¹³³ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries (May 12, 1945).

cause for alarm'.¹³⁴ It does not appear that local factory nurseries made a significant contribution to the wartime pre-school childcare problem.

Continuing growth towards the close of the hostilities

It would be easy to lay the responsibility for the lack of providing wartime nurseries at one door, but those involved were working in unprecedented circumstances. The blame for delays in providing wartime nurseries cannot fall entirely at the feet of officials – mothers also bore partial responsibility. Even once central guidance began to filter through, progress remained slow. Regional differences made it difficult for local officials to plan the growth of this facility. For example, the number of mothers using either a nursery or Birmingham Children's Home Service scheme fluctuated throughout the year, depending on the school holidays of older children. Local health visitors were familiar with this phenomenon and planned around it. Whether wartime industry or officials recognised the existence of this pattern is unclear. Mothers were induced to work by the opportunity to earn extra money between school holidays at which time they were too busy to work, so their incentive to do so was low. Even though these women usually returned to work once the children were back at school, sometimes this did not happen until the financial demands of the next holiday were on the horizon.¹³⁵

By March 18, 1942, Birmingham had opened fifteen day-nurseries and over the next few weeks, this number was expected to double.¹³⁶ It was thought that

¹³⁴ Ibid. (June 15, 1945).

¹³⁵ Cavenagh, W. E., 'The Birmingham Children's Home Service and the British National Child-minding Scheme', *Social Services Review* (March 1, 1951), volume 25, issue 1, pp. 501-508.

¹³⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (March 18, 1942).

approximately one hundred wartime nurseries were required in the city.¹³⁷ This number excluded nursery schools, classes and voluntary nurseries. The LEA managed to mobilise its provision more quickly than the Public Health Department probably because primary schools were more easily adaptable. This raises the question of whether the overall responsibility for this service was placed with the correct official department. By April 23 1942 Birmingham LEA had provided 190 nursery schools or classes for children under five to attend – representing a significant contribution to the wartime nurseries provided.¹³⁸ Even though some facilities were now available, it was estimated that in Birmingham alone there were one thousand children of working mothers under the age of five who had not been placed in a nursery. Perhaps mothers were unsure of the availability and how to access nursery places or they may have had their own private arrangements in place.¹³⁹

Nationally, almost four years into the hostilities, the combined official wartime pre-school childcare schemes created still failed to provide sufficient care for this age group with working mothers. There were approximately 59,000 children of women war-workers attending nurseries in 1943, and 5,000 with Registered Daily Guardians, leaving approximately 159,000 of the total number of children of women workers cared for under private minding arrangements.¹⁴⁰ Childcare provision was not universal and equal; not all councils were open to provide this service. If councils

¹³⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (March 13, 1942).

¹³⁸ Compiled by the author with data from: TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1939).

¹³⁹ *Herald*, 'What Are Day Nurseries?' (March 7, 1942), p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Summerfield, P., 'Women, Work and Welfare: A Study of Child Care and Shopping in Britain in the Second World War', *Journal of Social History* (1983), volume 17, issue 2, pp. 249-269.

had been obliged to finance the expansion of nurseries themselves, the development would undoubtedly have been much slower.¹⁴¹

Chapter 7 considers the development of Birmingham wartime nursery buildings from a number of perspectives. However, by mid-July 1944, local nurseries had shown impressive growth and comprised eighty-two wartime nurseries, one hundred and ninety-four nursery schools or classes, three voluntary nurseries and two factory nurseries.¹⁴² Given that the pre-war provision consisted of five LEA-provided and three voluntary establishments, accommodating approximately 460 children, the scale of the project is clear. Furthermore, an official framework now existed to build future pre-school childcare. From the outset, wartime nurseries were intended to be a temporary measure. The Board of Education intimated as early as July 20, 1944, that it did not 'desire more proposals for Nursery Classes to be submitted at the present time'.¹⁴³ Locally, in January 1945, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee began discussing how it would deal with the withdrawal of government funding for residential and wartime nurseries in its area.¹⁴⁴ This committee recognised that the need for wartime nursery provision was likely to continue for longer in Birmingham than in most other parts of the country, possibly another year.¹⁴⁵ Surprisingly, the local branch of the NSA was slow to appeal for the

¹⁴¹ Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), pp. 6-7.

¹⁴² Compiled by the author with data from: TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

¹⁴³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1944).

¹⁴⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1945).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (1942).

retention of wartime nurseries; correspondence was not sent to the Elementary Education sub-committee until February 5, 1945.¹⁴⁶ In June 1945, negotiations were taking place between Birmingham LEA and the local Public Health Department on how to deal with closures as they occurred. The possibility of transferring responsibility for some nurseries over to the LEA formed part of these discussions.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

This chapter explores the development of Birmingham wartime pre-school childcare through the inter-departmental and organisational relationships of those involved in their establishment. It examines to what extent the childcare was the result of an effective relationship between the different organisations responsible for the area, while also considering whether they might have curtailed its growth. Even though they realised that women would be an essential part of their munitions' workforce, Government officials approached the war without any preconceived ideas of how to care for the pre-school child. The official assumption was that these children would be covered by the evacuation schemes or by mothers making their own private minding arrangements. In reality, this did not happen and, due to Birmingham's industrial importance, local officials pre-empted central guidance in providing childcare in order to meet the demands of local industry to increase its female workforce. As local schemes were established before those in many other cities, Birmingham was often held up as an example of whether there was an actual requirement for a service and how it should look. The early creation of these wartime establishments encouraged experts, national and international, to the city – either to

¹⁴⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1945).

¹⁴⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9.

share knowledge or to learn from the city's experience. Although quantitatively limited, Birmingham's history of childminding and nursery provision aided this wartime growth, which would have occurred more rapidly, had it not been for restrictions imposed by central government's lack of funding and guidance. Preparation for war was complex and time-consuming; delays came from both local and central government with mothers sometimes slow to take up places in nurseries. While pressure groups advocating increased wartime nurseries were not always effective, they nevertheless kept the conversation for this provision alive. Local officials and those tasked with creating this service were aware of what would work in their areas. Without their persistence and knowledge, a project of this size could not have come to fruition. A significant project carried out by a group of Canadians formed part of this Birmingham wartime provision and this will be explored in the following two chapters, as it continues to address the third key question. To what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints affected its development?

CHAPTER 5: DR BLATZ AND THE CANADIAN TEAM: THE ORIGINS

Introduction

The present chapter draws attention to a childcare project carried out in Birmingham by a small Canadian team during the Second World War. Dr William Blatz and his female team came to Birmingham to assist with the mental health of pre-school children during a time of conflict. Blatz (Figure 5.1), director of the team, was a leading Canadian child psychologist and relative of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), an early practitioner of psychology.¹ The Canadian specialists arrived with theories, which had previously only been tried and tested with a limited range of people in Canada. They took advantage of a unique opportunity to test and share their modern ideas on child development in another country. Blatz and his team were engaged in what could be interpreted as a missionary activity to implement their theories in a new environment where the conditions might not have been propitious. He was already internationally renowned as being responsible for setting up the nursery education of the Dionne Quintuplets. Born in the early 1930s, these Canadian babies were the first-known surviving identical Quintuplets in recorded history.² In Birmingham, Blatz created the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre, which educationalists and public health officials observed with great interest. This

¹ Dr William E Blatz was Professor of Child Psychology and Director of the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto. Blatz is mostly referred to as Dr so for consistency this author will do likewise. Biographer of Blatz, Jocelyn Raymond, claims that he was a descendant of Mesmer but it is more accurate to say he was a relative. Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 5. Mesmer was the Viennese physician who left the word 'mesmerism' to posterity. For various reasons, Mesmer also gave hypnosis the rather unfavourable reputation that still persists in some quarters today. Mesmer's legacy continued into the nineteenth century and beyond, as arguments over his techniques shaped the development of hypnosis as we know it today. The History of Hypnosis [Online], <http://www.historyofhypnosis.org> (Accessed: July 3, 2016).

² Rosack, M. L., 'The Dionne Quintuplets, Perinatal Care a la 1930s Style', *AWHONN Lifelines* (August-September, 2004), volume 8, issue 4, pp. 348-355.

project comprised three aspects: training wartime nursery staff, providing nursery places and carrying out a child study.

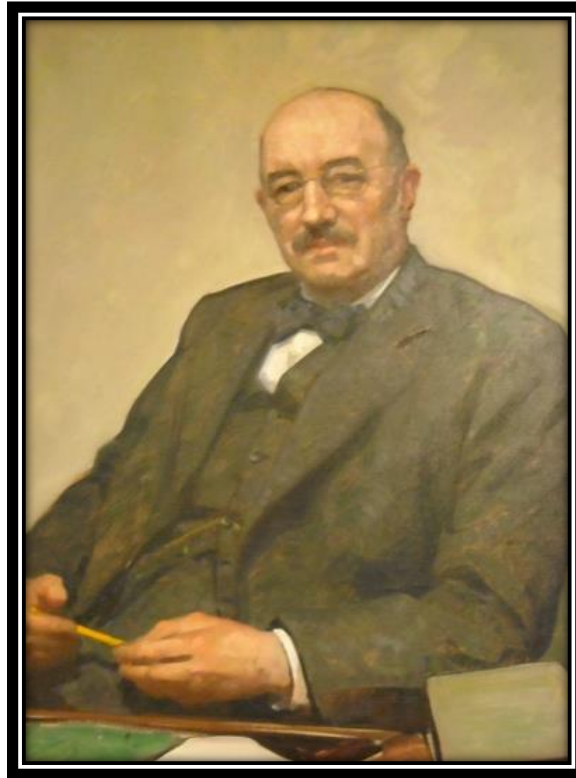


Figure 5.1: Dr William Emet Blatz (1895-1964) ³

As a significant part of local wartime pre-school childcare provision, this and the following chapter contribute to key question three: To what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints affected its development? The presence of Blatz and his team in Birmingham raises two questions. Firstly, why was the presence of Blatz and his team during the hostilities significant? Secondly, why was Birmingham chosen for their experimental work? To consider these points, a range of primary source material will be interrogated to establish: the extent to which Blatz and his team fitted within Birmingham's innovative approach towards wartime nursery provision. The chapter

³ Author's photograph, Image of original portrait, 2016, Dr William E Blatz by Cleeve Horne, University of Toronto Art Collection.

explores Blatz's practice within an evolving tradition of child psychology in Canada, the Canadian team, and considers why Birmingham was chosen for this project. Finally, conclusions are drawn in preparation for Chapter 6, which investigates how this Canadian team translated its Toronto experience into Birmingham wartime reality.

Little secondary material on the work carried out in Birmingham by this Canadian Team is available; what exists is largely contained in Canadian publications on child psychology, and there is little in British histories except for that by Joan Malden.⁴ The history of developmental psychology and child psychologies during the war has been thoroughly covered by Denise Riley, but, unfortunately, she does not mention Blatz, so her work does not help in understanding what he did.⁵ In order to understand the Canadian Team's relevance to wartime Birmingham pre-school childcare, we need to interpret the primary sources. Central and local government documents are interrogated, which are held by The National Archives and Library of Birmingham, Archives and Collections, but little official documentation exists.⁶ Blatz and his team, however, produced a significant amount of personal material, such as letters, photographs, diaries and scrapbooks, some of which is held by the University of Toronto.⁷ These sources are combined with an important private collection of archives, retained by Canadian team member Mary J Wright and bequeathed to the

⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, MS 4095, Selly Oak Nursery School Collection, Malden, J., 'The Education of Children before School Age 1912-1962' (University of Birmingham, 1964).

⁵ Riley, D., *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London, 1983).

⁶ TNA, DO 131 (University of Toronto), ED66, 69, 102, 138 (Education Department), MH52, 55 (Ministry of Health); LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book.

⁷ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection.

author. Although the Canadian material promotes the work of Blatz and his team at Garrison Lane as being the salvation of the wartime pre-school child, it provides vital evidence not recorded elsewhere. This study would have benefited from oral contributions from those receiving the services provided by this team. However, despite advertising for contacts, the author was unable to obtain first-hand accounts from student trainees, families or children describing their experiences. This absence of evidence from anyone who went through the system leaves the author reliant on those who were committed to the scheme, given the lack of evidence from an alternative perspective. Combining these sources, however, enabled some insight to be obtained into the working-class environment in which the Canadian team operated.

William Blatz and Childcare

Blatz's thinking about childcare and his work with children took place within a context of debate about the nature of the child and the role of childcare, but he rarely wrote about the theories which underpinned his approach and, as has been indicated, there is little about him elsewhere. He was a practitioner, who focussed on his relationship with the child, but he was part of a culture where theorists and practitioners were interested in child development.

In the early twentieth century, a group of social and educational reformers published guides that integrated nineteenth century educational and child-rearing theories with their new scientific approach, for example *Dr Montessori's Handbook*.⁸ Larry Prochner and Shelly Woitte suggest their theories 'were derived from direct

⁸ Montessori, M., *Dr Montessori's Own Handbook* (Dover, 2005).

experience or observations of children; [and] they consciously set out to break with tradition by re-examining early education in relation to contemporary concerns'.⁹ The authors argue the proliferation of guides to nursery education published in the 1920s and 1930s were in effect a marketing tool, a manifestation of the applied focus of the authors' research programs. Their aim was to 'raise the profile of [their own] institute of study and justify its research'. Prochner and Woitte argue 'many authors emphasized the experimental nature of their version of early education as they deliberately set out to break with historical tradition' and 'if the history was mentioned, it was either dismissive or highly selective'.¹⁰ Rather than building on each other's knowledge, the scientific childcare movement was extremely competitive theoretically.

Blatz was not the only child psychologist trying to attend to the wartime mental health of young British children and his approach was not always in line with that of others working in the same field. Anna Freud (1895-1982), youngest child of Sigmund Freud, and Susan Isaacs (1885-1948) were well known in English child psychology during the Second World War.¹¹ The work of Blatz and his team at Garrison Lane was often compared with Freud's project in London; however, they approached child mental health from opposite directions.¹² Freud was trying to repair what Blatz was hoping to prevent. Hampstead War Nurseries, London, was a refuge established by

⁹ Prochner, L., and Woitte, S, 'Still Missing? History chapters in introductory early childhood education textbooks from the 1990s to the 2010s', *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* (November 13, 2013), volume 34, issue 4, pp. 374-389.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Pines, M., 'Susan Isaacs' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: September 22, 2014); Willan, J., 'Susan Isaacs (1885-1948): Her Life, Work and Legacy', *Gender and Education* (2011), volume 23, issue 2, pp. 201-210.

¹² *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013). Anna Freud was the youngest child of Sigmund Freud, known as the founding father of psychoanalysis. Yorke, C., 'Anna Freud, (1895-1982)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: February 12, 2014).

Freud to provide residences for approximately one hundred children who were considered 'billeting problems'. Freud's work in the nursery was in response to the social upheaval and emotional distress faced by the children of war. These children were so distressed that they could not be evacuated without their mothers or had developed difficulties during foster-care. Freud applied her knowledge of child development to the children's care in these residential nurseries. Parents were involved as much as possible, in contrast to the typical wartime residential nursery. Children in Freud's nursery were organised into 'family' groups so that they received consistent care rather than being supervised by whichever member of staff happened to be on duty.¹³ This project received financial support from the American Foster Parents' Plan for War Children.¹⁴ Freud also used the residential nursery as an opportunity for observational research into the impact of war on children and their development, to foster better understanding of each child's needs.¹⁵ Susan Isaacs moved to academic work and from 1933 became Director of the Child Development Unit at the Institute of Education in London; she also managed the Cambridge Evacuation Survey which studied the effect of evacuation on children in 1939.¹⁶

Blatz operated in a childcare environment where child psychology was a newly emerging discipline in the 1920s when Canada was invaded by the mental hygiene movement launched earlier in the US. Mental hygiene in this period referred to the

¹³ Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families [Online], <http://www.annafreud.org> (Accessed: March 7, 2014); Burlingham, D. and Freud, A., *Young Children in War-time: A Year's Work in a Residential War Nursery* (London, 1942).

¹⁴ Midgley, N., 'Anna Freud: The Hampstead War Nurseries and the Role of the Direct Observation of Children for Psychoanalysis', *International Journal Psychoanalysis* (2007), volume 88, pp. 939-959.

¹⁵ Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families [Online], <http://www.annafreud.org> (Accessed: March 7, 2014) March 7, 2014); Burlingham, D. and Freud, A., *Young Children in War-time: A Year's Work in a Residential War Nursery* (London, 1942).

¹⁶ Pines, M., 'Susan Isaacs' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: September 22, 2014); Willan, J., 'Susan Isaacs (1885-1948): Her Life, Work and Legacy', *Gender and Education* (2011), volume 23, issue 2, pp. 201-210.

science of maintaining mental health and preventing the development of psychosis, neurosis, or other mental disorders.¹⁷ Wright suggests that the 'goals of the movement had recently changed from the treatment and prevention of mental illness to the promotion of robust mental health' – not by dealing with the symptoms but by preventing people from falling into mental illness. Those in the movement recognised that more scientific knowledge was required about the way children develop and the conditions which support the attainment of mental health.¹⁸ After graduating from medical school in the 1920s, Blatz turned his attention to his new and major interest – psychology.¹⁹ He studied at the University of Chicago, where Harvey Carr (1873-1954) headed the Psychology Department, and obtained his degree in 1924.²⁰ As he and his wife were expecting their first baby, they decided to return home to Canada for Blatz to seek work which he found at the University of Toronto.²¹

In 1925 Professor Edward Bott established the St. George's School for Child Study at the University of Toronto which eventually became known as the Institute of Child Study. Research there was based on the belief that mental hygiene could be positively changed through the study of children and a number of projects were directed by Blatz. One preventative project was to establish a nursery and parent education programme. The project focused on studying normal children at home and

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Mental Hygiene' [Online], <http://www.britannica.com> (Accessed: June 2, 2016).

¹⁸ Wright, M. J., 'Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the Teachings of W. E. Blatz', in: Prochner, L. and Howe, N. (eds.), *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past, Present and Future* (Vancouver, 2000), pp. 96-114.

¹⁹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 19.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 22-24. Harvey Carr was a founding father of functionalist psychology. Schultz, D. P. and Schultz, S. E., *A History of Modern Psychology* (USA, 2008).

²¹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 22-24.

in school. Children played and socialised at the nursery, while researchers engaged in close but unobtrusive observation. Parents of children in the nursery school were also expected to enrol and attend courses. Children of the educated were recruited for this project as their parents were usually more adventurous in choosing 'modern ways' over accepted practices.²²

Blatz's reputation grew, and he began to receive international acknowledgement for his ideas on child psychology and early education. His lecture 'Training of Young Children' delivered at University College, London in 1930 received recognition in *The Lancet*.²³ He conducted a tour in the 1930s specifically to look at nurseries in the United Kingdom and Europe.²⁴ Blatz's responsibility for managing the early education of the Canadian Dionne Quintuplets (Figure 5.2) in the same decade succeeded in widening his audience.²⁵ They were the first known surviving quintuplets anywhere in the world, so they presented Blatz with a unique opportunity to experiment and understand child development, and this provided relevant experience for his project in wartime Birmingham. From April 1935 to February 1938, Blatz became advisor for training the Quintuplets, supported by Dorothy Millichamp,

²² Ibid., p. 56.

²³ Author unidentified, 'Training of Young Children', *The Lancet* (May 24, 1930), pp. 1145-1146.

²⁴ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 93.

²⁵ The Dionne Quintuplets – Annette, Cécile, Emilie, Marie and Yvonne – were born in a small farmhouse on May 28, 1934, near the French-Canadian village of Corbeil, Ontario to Elzire and Oliva who already had five children. These five babies were the first-known surviving identical Quintuplets in recorded history. Early concerns about the babies' health soon transferred to their welfare once it became clear that they would probably survive. Just days after their birth, Oliva, their father, signed a contract to exhibit the girls in Chicago at the Century of Progress Exposition. This resulted in the Ontario government taking over guardianship of the Quintuplets. Separated from their parents and siblings they lived in a purpose-built hospital and nursery opposite the family home. The Quintuplets' medical needs were managed by Dr Allan Dafoe who had assisted at their birth. Wright, C., 'They Were Five: The Dionne Quintuplets Revisited', *Journal of Canadian Studies* (1994), volume 29, issue 4, pp. 5-14; Rosack, M. L., 'The Dionne Quintuplets, Perinatal Care a la 1930s Style', *AWHONN Lifelines* (August-September, 2004), volume 8, issue 4, pp. 348-355.

Margaret Fletcher and Anne Harris. These four played an important role in the later project carried out in wartime Birmingham.²⁶



Figure 5.2: Dionne Quintuplets²⁷

Blatz, while working with the sisters, planned to test his nursery school programme objectives used at the Institute of Child Study. These were: 'to promote healthy personality development of children both through their nursery experience and via their parents trained according to the methods of child study'.²⁸ Their parents and siblings could visit them but had no direct input into their care.²⁹ The Quintuplets lived in a specially constructed unit for almost eight years and during this time hundreds of thousands of visitors came to view them playing through a specially

²⁶ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets* (London, 1939), pp. xi-xii.

²⁷ Ibid., Frontispiece. Dionne Quintuplets additional reading: Brough, J., *We Were Five: The Dionne Quintuplets Story from Birth through Girlhood to Womanhood* (New York, 1965); Berton, P., *The Dionne Years: A Thirties Melodrama* (Toronto, 1977); Tesher, E., *The Dionnes* (Toronto, 1999).

²⁸ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

²⁹ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets* (London, 1939).

designed observation screen.³⁰ Blatz used an observation screen in his approach in Birmingham.

Even though their isolation restricted one aspect of Blatz's experiment, theories from the Institute were tried and tested on the Quintuplets, thus helping him to shape his ideas on child development. Blatz's experiment continued to be discussed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but surprisingly, James Brough's publication, written in collaboration with the four surviving Quintuplets in 1965, does not credit Blatz and his team's contribution to the girls' early care.³¹ Nursery procedures remembered by the sisters correlate with those used at the Toronto Institute of Child Study. They describe how the 'happiest, least complicated years of our lives were spent in the nursery', reporting how their 'overwhelming memory is of a wonderful, glowing happiness given, received and shared'.³² They recalled how they were kept 'as busy as beavers', and 'relished almost every moment of it'.³³ To what extent this optimistic narrative reflected the reality has been and probably will be explored for decades.³⁴

Blatz spoke out forcefully against a number of traditional childrearing methods such as physical punishment, shaming, promoting competition and blind obedience to authority as well as overprotecting children. Other experts and the Canadian press

³⁰ Prochner, L., and Doyon, P., 'Researchers and their Subjects in the History of Child Study: William Blatz and the Dionne Quintuplets', *Canadian Psychology* (1997), volume 38, issue 2, pp. 103-110.

³¹ Brough, J., *We Were Five: The Dionne Quintuplets Story from Birth through Girlhood to Womenhood* (New York, 1965).

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 58.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³⁴ The Dionne Quintuplets: Emilie died in 1954, Marie in 1970 and Yvonne in 2001; Rosack, M. L., 'The Dionne Quintuplets, Perinatal Care a la 1930s Style', *AWHONN Lifelines* (August-September, 2004), volume 8, issue 4, pp. 348-355. Annette and Cécile survive (May 2021).

felt that Blatz gave too much freedom to the children in his Toronto programme.³⁵

Family and colleagues were bemused by some of the stories which circulated about the freedom the children at the Institute were allowed. His colleague Mary J Wright recalled one rumour according to which Blatz's two sons were reported to be so out of control that they terrorised the neighbourhood. This story later came to be widely believed even though Blatz did not have any sons, only one well-behaved daughter.³⁶ Wright claimed that Blatz played with the press and experts by making statements to instigate debate.³⁷ He was experienced at working his audience: a favourite game for the younger Blatz and his siblings was 'speeching' where each child presented on a given topic.³⁸ These attempts to instigate debate sometimes led to Blatz being misquoted.³⁹

Neither Freud nor Isaacs were impressed with Blatz or his work. The feeling was mutual. Blatz met Freud during one of his English lecture tours and was pleased to find that his interpretation of mental hygiene, which stressed prophylaxis (prevention), made a far better impression on the audience than the psychoanalytic school of thought which she espoused.⁴⁰ After presenting a series of lectures at a government inspectors' training session, Blatz reported briefly in correspondence to his daughter Gery (Margery): 'Had a set to (*sic*) with Anna Freud and Susan Isaacs

³⁵ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

³⁶ Wright, M. J., 'Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the Teachings of W. E. Blatz', in: Prochner, L. and Howe, N. (eds.), *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past, Present and Future* (Vancouver, 2000), pp. 96-114.

³⁷ Wright, M. J., 'William Emet Blatz', in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211.

³⁸ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 10.

³⁹ *The Toronto Daily Star*, 'Some parents don't deserve right to manage children' (September 15, 1930), p. 1.

⁴⁰ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 183.

who were on the same programme'.⁴¹ To his colleague Dr Clarence Hincks, Blatz elaborated, stating: 'I attended all of their lectures and answered their criticisms; they didn't attend mine and just said I was hopelessly in error.' He also noted how, after the course, most of the inspectors visited Garrison Lane to see the school in action.⁴²

Freud and Isaacs' writings make no mention of Blatz, so it is not possible to explore what they actually thought about his work, beyond apparently dismissive comments.⁴³ Additionally, unlike Freud and Isaacs, Blatz did not produce a theoretical body of literature, so this absence also makes discussion of competing psychologies difficult. Even though, according to Freud, Blatz was 'hopelessly in error', the Garrison Lane logbook records how she tried to arrange for a child at her nursery to attend Blatz's school. However, Blatz's team was advised within Birmingham's education department against taking on 'museum pieces' (children with problems others had been unable to resolve) from outside the area.⁴⁴

Blatz's approach aimed to 'develop in children an attitude in life that will carry them through any emergency and any responsibility'.⁴⁵ His thoughts on education were 'based on the belief that the teacher's function was to "guide the child", to "lead" or "draw" out of him what is already there, to arouse his interest to the point "where he wants to do [something]"; it was then just 'a short step for the child "to learn by doing

⁴¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, *Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery* (September 8, 1942).

⁴² Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 185.

⁴³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18. The author has been unsuccessful in identifying Dr Alcock.

⁴⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (February 25, 1943).

⁴⁵ TTFRBL, Muir, M. D., The Staff, Dr. Blatz returns to Britain, *University News*, XLII (May 8, 1942),

because he wants to learn”.⁴⁶ Blatz considered his plan to work in wartime Birmingham as an unprecedented opportunity to help children to secure a happy, well-adjusted life.⁴⁷ He was drawing out talents, skills and abilities through learning and not by trying to define a child’s alleged innate abilities. This also required working with parents. It is not clear whether Blatz came with specific plans for working with the parents and families of the children attending Garrison Lane Nursery in a similar way to his approach in Toronto. He recognised the difficulties caused by the families’ home environment and wartime work commitments, but Blatz and his team encouraged parents into the nursery for them to see their work with the children. Eager to share their knowledge with the families of children attending Garrison Lane, they held evening sessions for the parents.⁴⁸

Our understanding of Blatz’s approach to childcare comes substantially through the writings of two people who worked with him, Mary J Wright and Mary L Northway.⁴⁹ Wright suggests: ‘There has been some debate about the ‘school’ of psychology and the ‘stream’ of educational thought that Blatz represented, no doubt, in part, because he maintained an independent stance and felt no indebtedness to anyone for his ideas’.⁵⁰ She explained how: ‘Blatz was opposed to the fierce empiricism that was practised by the behaviourists of his time’ and ‘he never abandoned the conviction

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, ‘Canadians tackle the slums’ (November 7, 1942); Prochner, L., and Howe, N., ‘The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary’, *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁴⁹ Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966); Wright, M. J., ‘William Emet Blatz’, in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211; Northway, M. L., ‘William Emet Blatz’, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (1980), volume 123, issue 1, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁰ Wright, M. J., ‘William Emet Blatz’, in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211.

that consciousness, although difficult to study, is the primary subject matter of psychology'. He also rejected the view that most human characteristics, physical or mental, are determined at conception by hereditary factors passed from parent to offspring.⁵¹

In her postscript to Blatz's book *Northway* describes how students 'frequently referred to the security theory as "the gospel according to Blatz,"'.⁵² The concept of security theory postulated by Blatz according to Wright's words was that the achievement of:

security (mental health) is the primary goal of human beings. He defined security as a state of mind characterized by serenity, which accompanies a willingness to make decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions. He believed that because of their immaturity and inability to make decisions based on a knowledge of the consequences of those decisions, children must be "dependently secure", that is, they must have dependable, consistent, trustworthy parents to provide a secure base that, as a result of their consistency, is somewhat boring. This, he said, gives children the *courage* and also the *desire* to reach out, accept the insecurity of the unknown, to explore, and learn. It is through this learning that children gradually develop trust in themselves or develop "*independent security*."⁵³

Blatz encouraged his colleagues to challenge his theories and on occasion they strengthened their own studies through their desire to prove him wrong. *Northway* argues that to Blatz 'security was no gospel to be accepted as dogma'. He expected his theory on security to provoke questions and to stimulate research.⁵⁴ Blatz was

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966), p. 123.

⁵³ Wright, M. J., 'William Emet Blatz', in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211.

⁵⁴ Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966).

raised in a family which encouraged debate and he wanted to be challenged.⁵⁵ He probably found Anna Freud and Isaacs failure to discuss his theories frustrating.

An observational approach was used by Blatz, Freud and Isaacs in their work. However, Freud and Isaacs had an interest in psychoanalysis, but Blatz was not a follower. By applying psychoanalytic insights into teaching and parenting, Freud wanted to 'create environments in which children could emotionally and creatively thrive'.⁵⁶ Isaacs preferred to take the holistic approach to education, focusing on all aspects of a child's growth.⁵⁷ Blatz on the other hand makes use of both empirical observations and the results of introspection.⁵⁸ He aimed to create conditions whereby a child could develop by learning from their mistakes and tried to achieve this in Birmingham.

Blatz's Canadian Team

Some degree of freedom was granted to Blatz over his choice of staff at the Canadian Institute of Child Study.⁵⁹ These employees were not teachers or researchers but were child oriented. His first experience of employing someone trained elsewhere had not ended well, so Blatz preferred to employ women who were 'young, bright girls from well-to-do families'.⁶⁰ He turned largely to female graduate

⁵⁵ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 10.

⁵⁶ Anna Freud Life and Work [Online], <https://www.freud.org.uk/education/resources/anna-freud-life-and-work/child-psychoanalysis> (Accessed: February 13, 2022).

⁵⁷ Early Years Pioneers: Susan Isaacs [Online], <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/articles/early-years-pioneers-susan-isaacs> (Accessed: February 10, 2022).

⁵⁸ REF Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966).

⁵⁹ Gul, P., *et al.*, 'Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology', *Canadian Psychology* (2013), volume 54, issue 2, pp. 94-104.

⁶⁰ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

students to work first as assistants and who later became staff.⁶¹ They were never paid much but they apparently enjoyed the work and in return Blatz worked with them so they could learn and develop as a team.⁶² Women who worked with him in this way did not feel exploited and they considered that their experience of working with Blatz helped to define their careers. Team member Mary J Wright described Blatz as 'a leader but never a boss' and said he 'had great respect for and faith in his staff'. Blatz 'offered them responsibility and the freedom to innovate' while he 'worked alongside them and inspired in them both affection and loyalty'.⁶³ Many of these women became part of Blatz's Garrison Lane team. Women interested in Canadian child psychology during the Second World War experienced expanded job and educational opportunities, as evidenced in the number of women whose academic histories were tied to the Toronto Institute of Child Study.⁶⁴

Blatz's original plan was for the team to spend a few months in Birmingham organising a training facility which could be run by others when they returned to Canada. It is not clear why this plan changed but it resulted in two groups of experts working in the city over a period of two years, while Blatz travelled between Canada and England, as necessary, to monitor the project. Blatz came to the city in June 1942 to set up the operation along with the first group of experts in early childcare education in Toronto, which consisted of Dorothy Millichamp, Margaret Fletcher,

⁶¹ Gul, P., et al., 'Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology', *Canadian Psychology* (2013), volume 54, issue 2, pp. 94-104.

⁶² *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁶³ Wright, M. J., 'W. E. Blatz, The Person and his Work', in: Volpe, R. (ed.) *The Secure Child: Timeless Lessons in Parenting and Childhood Education* (United States, 2010), pp. 15-41.

⁶⁴ Gul, P., et al., 'Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology', *Canadian Psychology* (2013), volume 54, issue 2, pp. 94-104.

Anne Harris, Mary McFarland and Mary J Wright (Figure 5.3).⁶⁵ Two or three English teachers were employed to help complete the staffing requirements and Wright recalled that ‘they [the English teachers] tried hard to fit in and were not a major problem’.⁶⁶ Research to date has been unable to identify these English women.

Funding for this group originally came from Canadian sources. Arriving as part of the Canadian Children’s Service the women were provided with uniforms which were obviously conspicuous and worthy of reporting, as one London newspaper journalist noted:

I noticed one in the West End. She wore a very smart Air Force blue uniform with the words “Canadian Children’s Service 1942” on the right sleeve. The same inscription appeared on her hat above an enamel and gold maple leaf badge.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

⁶⁶ *Wood Private Collection*, Correspondence from Mary J Wright to Lorraine Wood (January 28, 2014).

⁶⁷ Canadian Children’s Service was an organisation established by Dr C M Hincks, Director of the Committee for Mental Hygiene in Canada in 1941 to co-ordinate support and help to children and families in England during the Second World War. Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi; *The Evening Telegraph*, ‘Canada And Child Welfare’ (September 26, 1942), p. 4.



Figure 5.3: Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada, Dr William Blatz and the first group of women⁶⁸

Their uniform was something these women were proud of. At a glance it portrayed their occupation in important wartime work, providing them with a social status applicable to other women in wartime forces. Blatz was surprised at the benefits gained when they wore them; for example, they received reduced room rates at the Park Lane Hotel, London.⁶⁹

Once the nursery training centre was open and running, Blatz and three senior members of his team returned to Toronto. Blatz suggested that Wright and

⁶⁸ Wright, M. J., *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (Canada, 1997), p. 147.

⁶⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

McFarland (who became Smith when she married a Canadian in Birmingham) should remain at Garrison Lane when the others returned to Canada.⁷⁰ They were joined by a second group comprising Alison Mack, Margaret Hincks, Eleanor Hamilton, Joyce Cornish-Bowden, and Nancy Griffin (who became Chapman when she married in Birmingham).⁷¹ This group of women was employed under a temporary contract by the Birmingham Education Authority. The second group from Blatz's team arrived, again under the umbrella of the Canadian Children's Service, to work with Wright and McFarland (Smith) who remained in the city until the end of the project. This group, in a much stronger position, was able to build on the work of the original team, adding to the project's foundations. Nancy Griffin (Chapman) is missing and was probably the photographer; however, Figure 5.4 is thought to be a rare example of the team photographed while in Birmingham. There was only one brief transition period when they were all together in August 1942.

⁷⁰ Mary McFarland married fellow Canadian, Captain Neil Carmichael Smith, at Weoley Hill Village Church, Birmingham (August 15, 1942). TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernhardt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19 (October, 1942), p. 2; English register of marriages July, August and September, 1942; *Wood Private Collection*, Unidentified Canadian Newspaper, Wedding Announcement.

⁷¹ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi. Margaret Hincks was the daughter of Dr C. M. Hincks, Director of the Committee for Mental Hygiene of Canada. While in Birmingham Nancy Griffin married fellow Canadian, F./O. Antony Chapman, R.C.A.F., *Ancestry*, English register of marriages, 'October, November, December 1943' [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019) (December 29, 1943).



Figure 5.4: Group photograph of the Canadian Team
Back row left to right: Margaret Hincks, Eleanor Hamilton, Joyce Cornish-Bowden, Alison Mack, Mary McFarland (Smith), Mary Wright. Front row left to right: Dorothy Millichamp, Margaret Fletcher, Anne Harris⁷²

Blatz may have been the illustrious leader of this small Canadian Team but without the co-operation and support of this intelligent and enterprising team of women his objectives for this project may not have been achieved. At this time nursery education was almost entirely in the hands of women; Blatz as a man was an exception. The Canadian women in Blatz's team were well educated and to a higher level than would be expected from a typical nursery nurse in England. While Blatz reaped the glory and prestige from his work, these women quietly managed the day-to-day running of the establishments at both the Institute of Child Study in Toronto and Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre and translated his ideas and theories into

⁷² Wood Private Collection.

a workable structure. The women's remuneration while in Birmingham was far less than the expenses Blatz received to cover his travelling and living costs. Blatz's biographer, Jocelyn Raymond, raises the question of whether these women were being exploited. In reality, women's career choices during this period were limited and even though universities of the day did little to actively encourage the advancement of women, with Blatz the women were accepted on their own merits and their ideas were taken seriously.⁷³ While discussing the first generation of women in Canadian psychology at the University of Toronto, Gul *et al* suggest: 'For many of the women, their experiences with Blatz helped to define their careers'.⁷⁴ This was a suggestion confirmed by Millichamp and Fletcher who both found working at the Institute particularly liberating.⁷⁵ Similarly, Wright considered that Blatz was the biggest influence on her career in terms of his ideas and excitement.⁷⁶ Through these women, Blatz was able to test his theories while the women in turn managed to achieve respect and academic prominence in an environment which at the time would normally have been beyond their grasp.

These women were important in their own right and not only through their connection with Blatz. Shipping records reveal that they were well-travelled and for the majority this trip to England was not their first.⁷⁷ Whatever their status, in England most nursery nurses would not have experienced a university education. A cultural difference existed between this team and the community they served in Birmingham

⁷³ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 192, 200-201.

⁷⁴ Gul, P., *et al.*, 'Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology', *Canadian Psychology* (2013), volume 54, issue 2, pp. 94-104.

⁷⁵ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 200-224.

⁷⁶ Gul, P., *et al.*, 'Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology', *Canadian Psychology* (2013), volume 54, issue 2, pp. 94-104.

⁷⁷ *Ancestry* [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019), Passenger lists.

as the same level of urban poverty and deprivation did not exist in Toronto. Due to Blatz's persona and reputation, their contribution at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre risks being overlooked. Short biographies outlining the careers of the whole Canadian Team, including Blatz, have been produced (appendix 4) which reveal how most of these women continued to play a significant role in pre-school education or child psychology after the war. Five of the ten women team members – Joyce Cornish-Bowden, Margaret Fletcher, Margaret Hincks, Dorothy Millichamp and Mary J Wright – made the well-being of the pre-school child the main focus of their career (see appendix 4).

Relationships and friendships were formed while the women were in Birmingham. Nurse Ingram, for example, joined some members of the team on visits to the countryside which are memorialised in photographs, and she continued to correspond with them post-war.⁷⁸ However, their relationship with the local community is more difficult to determine. There does seem to have been an appreciation of and respect for the Canadians and their project, whether consciously or unconsciously, amongst the local people. Although not immune, Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre did not experience damage and theft to the same extent as other wartime nurseries. Mothers of those children attending the nursery donated rationed ingredients in order for Mary McFarland to have a wedding cake upon her marriage in Birmingham.⁷⁹ They seem to have welcomed these Canadians.

⁷⁸ Wood Private Collection; *Birmingham Gazette*, 'Miss Hamilton Remembers' (June 26, 1953), p. 3.

⁷⁹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 187.

Blatz and Birmingham

The Second World War provided unique research opportunities for child psychologists. Blatz's security theory was based on creating conditions for a child to grow into a robust person. The basis for his ideas was to let children learn through their own experience while protecting them from disasters, so eventually children would become secure in their knowledge that any mistakes can be dealt with so they are then able to handle big decisions.⁸⁰ He considered that the badly managed evacuation of children in England might be more harmful than the bombing. His wartime objective was to prevent mental damage to young children in the conflict.⁸¹

During a visit to England in the spring of 1941, Professor Edward Bott of the University of Toronto discussed Britain's wartime childcare with Sir Wilson Jameson, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health.⁸² Bott approached President Cody of the University of Toronto, suggesting that a team be sent to Britain to see what assistance could be offered. Dr Clarence M Hincks, Director of the Committee for Mental Hygiene of Canada, Professor Stuart Jaffray, Department of Social Work, and Blatz were invited by Jameson to visit England in the autumn of 1941. During this trip they visited reception areas, residential and day nurseries, hostels and evacuated

⁸⁰ Wood Private Collection, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁸¹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 160.

⁸² Professor Edward Bott established the St George's School for Child Study at the University of Toronto in 1925 which was eventually known as The Institute of Child Study. Bott established an interdisciplinary project administration board to set up studies of 1,400 elementary school children, looking at specific areas of their social adjustment. Dr William Blatz was appointed by Bott to direct these projects on behalf of this Board. Volpe, R., A Brief History of the Dr Erik Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto [Online], <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca> (Accessed: March 12, 2014).

districts to determine what assistance could be given.⁸³ Blatz's presence as part of this delegation was noted in *Nursery World*.⁸⁴

Following this visit, three teams of workers were sent to England in the summer of 1942. These included elementary school teachers to work in the infant and junior schools of London County Council Metropolitan area; psychiatric social workers to assist in the supervision of children evacuated to reception areas; and 'a group of Nursery School Teachers recruited from the staff for (*sic*) the Institute of Child Study of the University of Toronto and from other Nursery Centres in Canada'.⁸⁵ Blatz was appointed as director of the third project. He aimed to bring a team of specialists to open a nursery school training centre at Garrison Lane, Birmingham, to train staff in ways to work with pre-school children using his theories. While training the staff, he used the opportunity to carry out a study of the children attending the centre nursery.

Why Blatz decided to carry out his project in Birmingham rather than London, Leeds, Sheffield or Liverpool is important. Mr Bosworth Smith at the Board of Education was Blatz's London contact and they met in January 1942 when Bosworth Smith suggested that the Canadian should consider establishing a training centre in Birmingham and discuss this proposal with the local council.⁸⁶ It is not clear why Bosworth Smith directed Blatz towards the city to establish this project; however, several factors could have influenced his suggestion.

⁸³ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

⁸⁴ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Canadian Experts' (January 8, 1942), p. 101.

⁸⁵ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi. Even though members of the team are sometimes referred to as teachers they were not necessarily trained in this field.

⁸⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/34, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1942).

Firstly, local industry was desperate to increase its workforce and mothers with pre-school children were willing to work but by 1942 sufficient childcare was still not in place. Birmingham officials tried to be creative in finding ways to provide more nurseries but at that time full government funding was not available. Even where nurseries existed there was still a problem staffing them. In March 1942, Dr Ethel Cassie, Birmingham Senior Medical Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare, reported that she had six nurseries ready and equipped but without staff. This led one central government official to state: 'Birmingham is like a bottomless pit' in respect of staff.⁸⁷ As industrialists were desperate for women workers, the recruitment and training of nursery staff had to be increased.

Secondly, before Blatz set up the training centre in Birmingham, he was involved in another wartime project between the Universities of Toronto and Birmingham. An invitation was sent in May 1940 from the University of Toronto Group to the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester and Birmingham, offering to maintain a group of academics' children in Toronto for the duration of the war. Blatz allowed the volunteers organising this venture to use almost the entire premises of Toronto's Institute of Child Study.⁸⁸ This project was only halted when British government officials became concerned about the dangers posed by transporting children by ships, but a large number of children along with a few mothers accepted the offer. One Birmingham mother, Mrs Shapiro, gave birth to a son ten days after her arrival in Toronto.⁸⁹ During his wartime visits to Birmingham, Blatz sometimes resided with Isaac Shapiro, an academic at the University of Birmingham and husband of the

⁸⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9 (March 30, 1943).

⁸⁸ TNA, DO131/8, Offer from University of Toronto to maintain a group of English children in Canada, 1940-1944.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

mother cared for in Toronto.⁹⁰ Blatz therefore had connections with the city prior to his meeting with Bosworth Smith.

Thirdly, Birmingham Education Authority wanted its wartime nurseries to provide an education rather than just a child-minding service, as happened in some areas of the country.⁹¹ The authority embraced opportunities to work with experts and did not treat wartime nursery provision as merely a practical response to a problem. Blatz's scheme fitted within a tradition of childcare in Birmingham (Chapter 6).

Birmingham's reputation for creative wartime nursery provision was growing. London officials directed the Ministry of Information towards the city, citing it as a good example of how wartime nurseries could work.⁹² The Board of Education approached the local authority to ascertain whether it would co-operate with the Board in establishing a centre in Birmingham for the Midlands area, to train personnel for wartime nurseries.⁹³ Birmingham Local Education Authority was anxious to co-operate and agreed to provide the necessary buildings.⁹⁴ Blatz probably saw the Birmingham officials' openness to experiment as an opportunity to test his theories as he and his team would be able to work with and study children who had previously never experienced nursery education.

⁹⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (June 27, 1942). Shapiro's address: 8 Wellington Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (June 20, 1942). Isaac Shapiro (1904-2004), was a lecturer in the Department of English and a member of the University of Birmingham for more than 80 years. *The Birmingham Post*, 'Shakespearian scholar Isaac Shapiro, dead, aged 99' (March 25, 2004), Obituaries.

⁹¹ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013).

⁹² TNA, MH55/2416, Ministry of Health, Day Nurseries Wartime Policy, Correspondence between Miss A L Puxley, Ministry of Health and Miss M Smieton, Ministry of Labour (April 28, 1941).

⁹³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of Birmingham City Council, 1939-1945 (June 2, 1942).

⁹⁴ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Correspondence from A. J. Finney, Board of Education to E. Hale, H. M. Treasury (March 18, 1942).

Blatz was not directed towards Garrison Lane School but selected it himself. Prior to officially offering Birmingham Education Committee his help, Blatz and some of the committee members had already toured a number of schools in the city. He determined in February 1942 that an empty section of Garrison Lane School, Bordesley (Figure 5.5) would be ideal for his project, as it served children from working-class families.⁹⁵



Figure 5.5: Garrison Lane School⁹⁶

Garrison Lane School was an imposing building with its tall tower which was where the team set up camp in a small room at the top upon arrival. Blatz likened the

⁹⁵ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi; Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁹⁶ Wood Private Collection.

school to a medieval monastery.⁹⁷ The school was surrounded by overcrowded housing and industry: living conditions which historians Anthony Sutcliffe, Roger Smith and Carl Chinn have documented.⁹⁸ Blatz declared it was his 'intention that we should demonstrate the success of our venture in one of the most unpropitious areas in all England', to show how the techniques used at the Toronto nursery could work anywhere.⁹⁹ He planned to complete a social survey of the families of children attending the school, but this was not actually carried out.¹⁰⁰ Blatz had probably not anticipated how difficult working under wartime conditions would be.

Those nurseries without their own kitchen facilities relied on food transported from special temporary units set up to provide and transport meals.¹⁰¹ Blatz's decision to use Garrison Lane was influenced by the ability to provide the children with fresh food which met approved school menus from the same building with the least confusion.¹⁰² He explained in correspondence to colleague Clarence Hincks, how: 'One of the conditions which made Garrison Lane a happy choice was that a year previously the northern section of this building had been converted into a British

⁹⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁹⁸ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974); Chinn, C., *Homes for People: Council Housing and Urban Renewal in Birmingham, 1849-1999* (Studley, 2001).

⁹⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰⁰ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 177.

¹⁰¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of Birmingham City Council, 1939-1945 (June 2, 1942). Wartime Nursery Central Kitchens were at Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak and Yardley Green Road, Small Heath, each serving approximately 2,000 meals daily. *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Public notices' (January 1, 1943), p. 2. Oak Tree Lane cooked and supplied food to thirty of Birmingham's wartime nurseries. *Evening Dispatch*, '7 More War-time Nurseries' (February 19, 1943), p. 4.

¹⁰² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942); *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (January 28, 2014).

Restaurant.¹⁰³ This was one of the wartime facilities that school architect; William Benslyn was responsible for establishing in Birmingham.

Blatz proposed to organise two nursery classes which would become the demonstration school for a course where women could receive instruction prior to admission into the Child Care Reserve (CCR). Infant teachers and nurses interested in nursery schoolwork could also attend.¹⁰⁴ During an interview for the University of Toronto's *University News*, Blatz suggested that the British private system for training teachers was unable to cope with the large demand for nursery staff and stated that his establishment 'will be the first system for Nursery School instruction in England established by British authorities'.¹⁰⁵ This statement was not entirely accurate. Garrison Lane was probably the only training centre wholly managed by Canadians, but some CCR courses arranged by the Birmingham Education Committee were already operating before Blatz's offer to help.¹⁰⁶ Approval had been granted to appoint Miss F Sutton, formerly a lecturer in Infant and Nursery School methods at Homerton College, Cambridge, to take charge of a course which commenced on February 16, 1942, at Rea Street Nursery. The necessity of training sufficient staff to manage the increased nursery provision had already been recognised by the Committee, which realised how Blatz's proposal offered far more than a basic

¹⁰³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942). British Restaurants were created during the Blitz to provide cheap meals for all but were mainly intended to service office and industrial workers from surrounding factories. They were opened at the discretion of local authorities and managed by them on a non-profit basis. Nationally, 2,160 had been opened by September 1943. Calder, A., *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (London, 1971); Atkins, P. J., 'Communal feeding in war time: British Restaurants 1940-1947', in: Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I., Duffett, R. and Drouard, A. (eds.), *Food and War in Twentieth Century Europe* (Oxon, 2016), pp. 139-153.

¹⁰⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/34, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (February 19, 1942).

¹⁰⁵ TTFRBL, Muir, M. D., The Staff, Dr. Blatz returns to Britain, *University News*, XLII (May 8, 1942), p. 241.

¹⁰⁶ *Birmingham Post*, 'War workers children' (April 29, 1942), p. 2.

wartime nursery training for their establishments. His offer was 'very attractive and would give the teachers and others in the City an opportunity of receiving many new ideas in connection with Nursery School work'. In February 1942 the Sub-Committee recommended that Blatz's offer be 'warmly approved' and agreed that the facilities for the development of his project should be placed at his disposal.¹⁰⁷ Blatz met with Birmingham School Architect, William Benslyn, to discuss the structural changes required in the building before returning to Toronto to make preparations while the building work was carried out.

Conclusion

The chapter has explored Blatz's practice within an evolving tradition of child psychology in Canada, his Canadian team, and considers why Birmingham was chosen for this project to establish; the extent to which Blatz and his team fitted within Birmingham's innovative approach towards wartime nursery provision. Blatz's primary concern was for the welfare and mental health of pre-school children during the hostilities, but the experience also provided an opportunity to study these working-class children. He was not the only child psychologist trying to attend to the wartime mental health of young British children and his approach was not always in line with that of others working in the same field for example Anna Freud and Susan Isaacs. Blatz was a practitioner, who focussed on his relationship with the child, but he was part of a culture where theorists and practitioners were interested in child development. Freud and Isaacs had an interest in psychoanalysis, but Blatz was not a follower. By applying psychoanalytic insights into teaching and parenting, Freud

¹⁰⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/34, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (February 19, 1942).

wanted to 'create environments in which children could emotionally and creatively thrive'.¹⁰⁸ Isaacs preferred to take the holistic approach to education, focusing on all aspects of a child's growth.¹⁰⁹ Blatz on the other hand made use of both empirical observations and the results of introspection.¹¹⁰ He created conditions whereby a child could develop by learning from their mistakes.

Enthused by the results of their work carried out in Toronto, Blatz and his team were like missionaries in an alien environment, committed to replicate their work in an unpropitious area of Birmingham. The Canadian women were mostly home-grown by Blatz, being trained at the Institute of Child Study, Toronto or by working with him on other projects. It made sense for him to bring his team to Birmingham as they could establish a framework, within which they could start to work more quickly than if he needed to train local women. These Canadian women were well educated, to a higher level than would be expected compared with a typical nursery nurse in England. Their task was to prepare child care reservists for the emergency wartime nurseries or classes as quickly as possible. Blatz's team translated his ideas and theories into a workable structure. They used an approach to child psychology that was different from other methods widely employed in Britain.¹¹¹

A combination of official, industrial and social conditions guided Blatz towards wartime Birmingham. In particular, the insatiable appetite of local industry to increase its workforce necessitated the provision of nursery places with trained staff

¹⁰⁸ Anna Freud Life and Work [Online], <https://www.freud.org.uk/education/resources/anna-freud-life-and-work/child-psychoanalysis> (Accessed: February 13, 2022).

¹⁰⁹ Early Years Pioneers: Susan Isaacs [Online], <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/articles/early-years-pioneers-susan-isaacs> (Accessed: February 10, 2022).

¹¹⁰ REF Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966).

¹¹¹ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

on a large scale. Local officials had the ability to embrace new opportunities and had the confidence to allow Blatz the freedom to run this project. Historically, local mothers worked and were used to doing this outside the home and remained in Birmingham rather than evacuating out of the city with the younger children. This in effect created a large group of children of working-class mothers for Blatz and his team to study.

To summarise, Birmingham local industry required an increased female workforce which in turn necessitated appropriate childcare. Blatz supported by his team was able to test his approaches to childcare on a number of pre-school children – in this case on children of the working classes, who were different from those he had worked with in Canada. Birmingham's LEA had a tradition of experimentation in nursery education. This collaboration was beneficial to both sides offering a further opportunity to innovate. To what extent these Canadians were able to translate their approaches into reality in wartime Bordesley is explored in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: DR BLATZ AND THE CANADIAN TEAM: THE BIRMINGHAM EXPERIENCE

Introduction

In 1942, Ernest Bevin, wartime Minister of Labour and National Service, apparently told Blatz: 'I do not suppose anyone in this country thought, before the war, that a nursery school would be an essential part of our defence programme.'¹ Birmingham businesses had a labour shortage which could not be satisfied without encouraging more women into their workforce to complete wartime contracts. Parents required safe and convenient childcare while they worked. By the time Blatz offered his help, nursery provision was already expanding, but this required additional trained staff. Blatz's project comprised three aspects: creating training for wartime nursery staff; providing nursery places; and carrying out a child study. Primarily, he wanted to protect the mental health of pre-school children living under wartime conditions. However, he was also motivated by an opportunity to test his theories within a community which was culturally, economically and socially very different from what he had previously worked with. In addition, this project opened up opportunities to disseminate his progressive vision of childhood in Britain through training courses and public lectures, or by collaboration with various teaching associations.

Under the auspices of the Canadian Children's Service, Blatz's group of middle- or upper-class women travelled from the relative safety of Canada to work in a potentially dangerous environment. Like a missionary, Blatz led his acolytes to

¹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 165. The biographer does not provide a date for Bevin's statement and the present author was unable to find an exact date.

promote and implement their modern ideas on child development using the Garrison Lane Project as their platform. They believed that the children's lives could be improved by their intervention.

The chapter examines two questions. Firstly, how did the team adapt and develop its Canadian approach in order for it to succeed in Birmingham by engaging with sections of society with which they had little experience? Secondly, how did Blatz and his Canadian Team's approach not only give impetus to Birmingham wartime pre-school childcare but also potentially influence post-war elementary education? This subject is pursued through three themes by firstly dealing with how the Canadians adjusted to wartime Birmingham exploring the vast cultural difference between them and the people with whom they worked. It then considers the extent to which Blatz and his team were able to apply their intentions to the reality of working with the children, families and students at Bordesley. The local and national impact of the team is then explored.

Adjusting to Birmingham

The first step in adjusting to Birmingham was to make Garrison Lane School suitable for Blatz's work. Birmingham School Architect, William Benslyn, arranged for structural alterations to the building, which Blatz requested to be carried out while he returned to Toronto to prepare a team to return to England. Blatz and Benslyn were both experimental in their approach to nursery provision in their particular area of expertise (see Chapter 7 for a fuller account of Benslyn's contribution). Blatz expressed his surprise at the speed with which the Birmingham authorities were able to make decisions and complete the extensive alterations. His team received a cable

on May 1, 1942 informing him: 'School ready. When do you arrive?'² Evidence to date has not revealed whether Benslyn returned to see Garrison Lane in operation, but his wife did in September 1942.³

After structural alterations to Garrison Lane School were completed, Blatz and his team faced the challenge of establishing a rapport with local people while based in Britain. This section considers the diverse relationships of the Canadian team and those with whom they mixed, so important to the success of this project. Their ability to connect with the Birmingham working classes is evidenced in this chapter but how they originally gained the confidence and support of these people is not clear. Even Birmingham employers experienced in dealing with the local community were not always successful in gaining the confidence of their new workforce. A Mass Observation report following an investigation carried out on women employees at Tube Investments, Aston, records suspicion at everything the 'gaffers' (management) did.⁴ Women had not been employed in the factory previously and the nature of the work was heavy and dirty and the factory lacked basic facilities, such as ladies' toilets and washrooms to clean up before eating. Even though designed for the women's benefit, management attempts to improve working conditions were regarded suspiciously. There was a 'them and us' attitude within the female workforce towards anyone considered better educated or of higher authority. Whilst factory management was experiencing difficulties in bridging this suspicion, Blatz and his team seem to have found ways to gain the respect and support of the women with whom they dealt.

² Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Garrison Lane Visitor books 1 and 2.

⁴ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012).

Blatz was perplexed after his first meeting with the parents of potential applicants for Garrison Lane Nursery and described how: 'Friendliness (*sic*) and a spirit of cooperation were manifested, poverty, grimyness (*sic*) and a curious submissiveness were all to (*sic*) evident.'⁵ The poverty and grime could have been aggravated by the hostilities, as these families had been living under wartime conditions for more than two years. Blatz and his team's nationality probably encouraged a nervous compliancy from the parents which was interpreted as submissiveness.⁶

The project's success relied upon the Canadian team successfully communicating and connecting with the children, parents, students, and local authorities, however, they did not live near Garrison Lane. They resided in accommodation in prosperous areas of the city, which was very different from the environment of the nursery. Blatz and his team arrived in Birmingham but were not conveniently accommodated near to Garrison Lane among the families with whom they worked. Instead during their stay, the first group of Canadian women were billeted in premises belonging to two prominent Birmingham families, the Cadburys and the Pinsents.⁷ Their apartment at the Cadbury residence was part of the large building (Figure 6.1) set in extensive private grounds and did not resemble the accommodation occupied by other nursery staff transferred to Birmingham or the children they were caring for. They took

⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁶ Volpe, R., A Brief History of the Dr Erik Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto [Online], <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca> (Accessed: March 12, 2014).

⁷ 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham (Former home of George Cadbury, later became Fircroft College of Education) and 29 Selly Wick Road, Selly Park, Birmingham home of Mr Roy Pinsent. Kelly's Directories Limited, *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham (with its suburbs) and Smethwick* (Birmingham, 1939). The first Canadian group consisted of Dorothy Millichamp, Margaret Fletcher, Anne Harris, Mary McFarland (Smith) and Mary J Wright. Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

advantage of the grounds when holding reunions with fellow members of the Canadian Children's Service working in other areas of the country.



**Figure 6.1: Mary Wright in the grounds of a Cadbury residence
(now Fircroft College) ⁸**

Three women from the Cadbury family and Mary Tirzah Pinsent were members of the Nursery School Association in December 1928.⁹ Both philanthropic families influenced Birmingham education and some members of the Cadbury family were particularly supportive of pre-school education.¹⁰ The second group of Canadian

⁸ *Wood Private Collection*. The Canadian women rented an apartment in this Cadbury residence.

⁹ TNA, ED24/1466, Board of Education, The Nursery School of Great Britain 5th Annual Report (December, 1928).

¹⁰ Birmingham's first free kindergarten was supported by Mrs Barrow Cadbury. LOB, Archives and Collections, L/F/48/31;453601, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, Lloyd, J., 'The Beginnings of the Nursery School Movement in Birmingham' (London, 1931). A nursery was opened in 1939 by family members in memory of Edith Cadbury, a pioneer of the Nursery School Movement. Edith Cadbury Nursery School [Online], <http://www.edithcadbury.bham.sch.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2016).

women resided at the Hagley Grove Hotel, Edgbaston.¹¹ Blatz stayed at the Queens Hotel, near New Street Station, before moving to reside at the home of Professor Isaac Shapiro.¹²

Originally, the Canadian women were only to stay in Birmingham for a few months while the centre was established. Mary Wright recalled how Dame Elizabeth Cadbury was prepared to accommodate them during the summer of 1942 because of her interest in early education. When it was decided that Wright and Mary McFarland (Smith) would remain in Birmingham to continue the project at Garrison Lane, they had to move to property belonging to the Pinsents because soldiers had been billeted in the Cadbury property.¹³ Accommodation in Birmingham was limited for new migrants and properties of all classes were commandeered to ease the situation. Offering to accommodate the team may not have been an entirely altruistic act on the part of the Cadburys and Pinsents. It could have been a way for these families to control the class of people staying in their homes. Blatz considered that the Cadburys' welcome was less than enthusiastic. Food served by the Cadburys was one area in which Blatz thought his team were treated a little unfairly. A healthy slice of the Canadian women's salary went for room and board, but they were served basic meals while the Cadburys reserved special treats for themselves.¹⁴ Wartime benevolence was limited in its reach.

¹¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

¹² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (June 27, 1942).

¹³ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013).

¹⁴ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 169.



Figure 6.2: Margaret Hincks with Mary Wright and Mary McFarland (Smith) in their apartment at the Cadbury residence ¹⁵

The Canadian women may have felt that they were being treated as a lower species while living at the Cadbury residence, but their experience was still very different from that of war workers brought to work in city factories. One factory welfare officer recalled that the strongest complaints came from girls who resented being expected to accept a much lower standard of living than they had been accustomed to, an experience similar to that of the Canadian women. However, in the factory workers' case, some found that they were also expected to spend their 'whole private life, and often share a bed, with an incompatible stranger'.¹⁶

Transport was another area where the Canadian team experienced favour. Local trams and buses were a puzzling experience to the Canadian women when commuting from their accommodation to Garrison Lane.¹⁷ Later, in the summer of 1942 a car and ration of petrol was allocated to transport the women to the school

¹⁵ *Wood Private Collection*, Left to right Margaret Hincks with Mary Wright and Mary McFarland (Smith).

¹⁶ Mass Observation, 'Tube Investments, Aston, Birmingham', Report No 1843 (November, 1942), *Mass Observation* [Online], <http://www.amdigital.co.uk> (Accessed: November 20, 2012).

¹⁷ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 169.

each morning.¹⁸ This was unusual because in 1942 petrol for private use had been withdrawn completely and was only available for work deemed essential.¹⁹ Local transport was not the only predicament with which the team had to contend. In correspondence, Blatz shared with his daughter how 'the smell around the school are [is] still intriguing but one can get used to anything'.²⁰ Manufacturers in the Bordesley area included a paint works, motor-car factory, biscuit and cake works and a cardboard box producer.²¹ Despite the differences between the Canadians and the people of Birmingham, they were able to establish themselves in the town and make an impact.

Intentions versus reality

Implementing the Garrison Lane project was complex and often required deviation from the Canadian team's original plans. Through the themes of health, intelligence, education and hygiene, this section examines how the team adapted their expectations to the reality of the situation. Blatz and his team wanted to implement and test their Toronto experience in a Birmingham wartime nursery training centre environment. From a number of perspectives this project had the potential for disaster. Members of the Canadian team may have known each other, but they had not necessarily worked together as a team. The combination of war and the unfavourable living conditions of families in the area chosen by Blatz for his project meant that their work would be challenging. If the project was to be successful, the

¹⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, Correspondence between Wilson Jameson, Ministry of Health and Dr W. E. Blatz (August 27, 1942).

¹⁹ Calder, A., *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (London, 1971), pp. 275-278.

²⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (June 20, 1942).

²¹ Briggs, A., *History of Birmingham, volume II, Borough and City, 1865-1938* (London, 1952), p. 299.

Canadians had to engage not only with the children but also their parents. The standard of students attending their Child Care Reserve (CCR) courses was particularly varied in terms of age, social class and educational abilities. Negotiating the complex wartime trajectories of central and local government was also an obstacle not easily overcome. Even though officials played a supportive rather than a leading role in this project, relationships still had to be built to enable these strangers working in Birmingham to function. Additionally, the Canadians were foreigners: they may have spoken the same language but were lacking experience in the environment they entered.

Blatz and his team's intention was to run Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre along the same lines as the Toronto Institute of Child Study.²² They had three main aims: firstly, to help maintain or enhance the mental health of pre-school children in a country in the middle of a conflict; secondly, to create staff training to enable others to manage wartime nurseries in a similar way; thirdly, to engage with the local families of children attending the nursery to ensure that their work continued once the team returned home. Except for the work carried out with the Dionne Quintuplets, Blatz's theories had only been tried and tested on the children and families of the middle or upper classes and the well-educated. By applying these theories to a group of working-class children, Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre provided an opportunity for the Canadians to carry out an experiment which could never have been replicated in Canada. Adaptations had to be applied to the day-to-day schedule and management of the nursery to allow for cultural differences.

²² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

Interest in Blatz's project was recorded in a number of newspapers and journals.²³

Wright expressed her surprise at the esteem in which they were held upon arrival and felt that early education in Birmingham was far more advanced than in Canada at the time.²⁴

Unusually, Blatz was given *carte blanche* for the organisation and management of the Garrison Lane Project, with key education and public health employees playing a supportive role. Equipment purchased in Canada for use at Garrison Lane was lost in transit and with wartime shortages it was not easily replaced. The local authorities helped with supplies where possible but responsibility for furnishing both the nursery and student training area fell mainly to the team. In a creative way they adapted items found abandoned around the school until both areas were furnished.²⁵

Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre opened its doors to forty-two children between the ages of two and five on July 1, 1942, and forty student child care reservists a few days later.²⁶

Blatz perceived educational programmes as being more important than merely providing custodial care in wartime nurseries and was keen to show what was being done in Canada.²⁷ He was convinced that any training to carry an individual through normal life would also carry them through abnormal circumstances.²⁸ The first pupils admitted were interviewed and selected by Blatz and Dorothy Millichamp from those

²³ *Birmingham Post*, 'Nursery school specialists' (July 10, 1942), p. 2; TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Canadian Experts' (January 8, 1942), p. 101.

²⁴ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013).

²⁵ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

²⁶ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii-xi.

²⁷ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013).

²⁸ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 165.

parents and children directed for interview via Miss Maley, Headmistress of the nearest school, Tilton Road. Garrison Lane Nursery was an administrative appendage of this establishment.²⁹ It is not clear how subsequent pupils were allocated places. Blatz described the children as 'really nice and jolly', but 'how they grow up into the kind of adults we see is still a mystery'.³⁰ The parents' reaction to these interviews is not clear.

The Canadians' planned schedule had to be changed on the first day. Blatz described the children's first outdoor playtime to colleague Clarence Hincks, Director of the Committee for Mental Hygiene of Canada, in correspondence:

Through the French doors into the garden trooped the group, immediately to disappear like quick-silver into every nook and cranny, every gate was explored, every door opened. Where is Eileen? Where is George or Brian? Who is that disappearing down the man-hole?³¹

The timetable was temporarily abandoned as Fletcher said 'Let's get them in'.³² This was to be the first of many adjustments to the time-table due either to air raid precautions or other unexpected procedures: Blatz considered that '[o]ne expedient rearrangement of the routine did not mean giving up a principle'.³³

²⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

³⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (June 20, 1942).

³¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.



Figure 6.3: Children supervised by Margaret Fletcher in the playground at Garrison Lane Nursery ³⁴

A photograph of Fletcher and the children (Figure 6.3) shows a makeshift fence, erected until a permanent one could be built, in an effort to retain the youngsters.

The clothes worn by the children were provided by the Canadian Team for use while at the nursery. This image of the playground indicates the close proximity of the establishment to housing. There was room to play but no evidence of a garden and only one small tree can be seen.

Millichamp told how Garrison Lane was really their 'first experience at applying the Institute's theory, principles, and practices to a group of under-privileged children'.³⁵

³⁴ Wood Private Collection.

³⁵ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

While the team realised that it needed to study the background of the children and their parents, the immediate concern was for the physical condition of these children.³⁶ Dr Dorothy Beaumont and Nurse Lucy Ingram were allocated to work with the team by the LEA.³⁷ Ingram was delegated to Garrison Lane for one and a half hours each day.³⁸ Unusually, Beaumont could only act in an advisory capacity until Blatz's approval had been obtained to carry out any changes to nursery procedures. It was probably Blatz's medical training which enabled him to control this aspect of the children's care. Even if Beaumont was originally a little surprised by her restricted influence over the children's health, the two mutually respected and supported each other throughout the project.³⁹

Millichamp explained how some of the children did not know how to eat from a plate. They also had to be introduced to play as they did not know how to use typical nursery school materials. She told how even the washroom was a source of adventure for some of these children; since they did not have running water in their homes, they loved turning on the taps. Far more adult intervention was required than the team was used to in Canada. Millichamp could not remember any Toronto wartime nursery where they faced the developmental delays experienced at Garrison Lane. She recalled how attendees at Garrison Lane 'were not mentally retarded children, but they were mentally underdeveloped children who had a long way to

³⁶ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 177.

³⁷ *Wood Private Collection*, Correspondence from Mary J Wright to Lorraine Wood (January 28, 2014).

³⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *Globe and Mail*, 'Among Ourselves' (November 23, 1942).

³⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (April 15, 1943).

go'.⁴⁰ Similar developmental delays could still be witnessed in those Birmingham nurseries which accommodated children from the poorer areas of the city in the 1960s.⁴¹ Wright was impressed by the response of these inner-city children to the Canadian programme, stating that 'the way their attitudes to their teachers and each other changed was remarkable'.⁴² Perhaps for the first time in their lives most of these children were sitting down to eat, sleeping in a bed alone and using a toilet under the same roof.⁴³ Without force or punishment, by suggestion rather than command, these children were trained. They learned to wash their faces, comb their hair and to eat at a table. While developing as individuals they were also learning to live their lives in different ways.⁴⁴

Wright thought that one of the reasons she was picked to join the Canadian Team was her ability to play the piano.⁴⁵ Margaret Fletcher considered 'music would be one of the most effective ways to communicate with the children and win their trust'.⁴⁶ As an accomplished piano player, Wright's skills were excellent but Blatz considered her ability at the 'untuned' piano before a tuner was arranged to be magnificent, even if the end result was sometimes confusing. On one occasion when he thought she

⁴⁰ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁴¹ *Wood Interviews*, Dr Janet Sullivan (February 15, 2017).

⁴² Wright, M. J., 'The Secure Preschooler: Nurturing Creativity with Courage, Wisdom with Responsibility', *Canadian Psychology* (2010), volume 51, issue 4, pp. 231-240.

⁴³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

⁴⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, 'Canadians tackle the slums' (November 7, 1942).

⁴⁵ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁴⁶ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 166. Fletcher compiled and co-authored a book of nursery rhymes, songs, singing games and playlets which was reprinted a number of times. Fletcher, M. I. and Dennison, M. C., *The High Road of Song. For Nursery Schools and Kindergartens. Nursery rhymes, songs, singing games, and playlets* (Canada, 1946).

was playing the 'Reel of Tulloch', the children were singing 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' and one workman claimed to recognise the 'Third Internationale'.⁴⁷ By the end of the project some of the action songs sung by the children were said to have 'a distinct Canadian flavour' to them.⁴⁸

Fletcher was credited by Blatz with running the school as 'smoothly as oiled silk' and he described how: 'Every music circle was a public performance. Every washroom a spectacle and every meal a zoological episode. But – the routine carried on.' After a month, every child was sleeping at the rest period: 'Even the most recalcitrant – and there were some dandies', some were more uncooperative than others.⁴⁹

Even though the Canadians did not carry out full family surveys of the children attending the nursery, as intended, they did complete a small number of studies. Forty-five children were registered to attend Garrison Lane but only twenty-four had been enrolled for ten months or more – which raises questions about stability of attendance – but to date there is no indication why there was such a quick turnover of pupils. It could possibly have been due to continuing wartime changes in family or working conditions. This reduced the number of children Blatz and his team were able to study over their two years at the centre; even so, changes were noted and an improvement in the health of the children was witnessed. Of the twenty-three

⁴⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11. 'The Internationale' was, of course, the anthem of the socialist movement.

⁴⁸ *Evening Dispatch*, 'Canadian Nurses' Farewell Party' (June 28, 1944), p. 3.

⁴⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18. Dandies: Shortened from Jim-Dandy chiefly a US colloquial used to describe a superior example of its kind. Cambridge Dictionary [Online], <http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org> (Accessed: April 4, 2020).

Blatz did not blame parental care for the children being underweight but pointed out how home life could not possibly compete with facilities which were provided in a modern nursery school.⁵²

Not only did the health and social abilities of the Garrison Lane children improve but positive changes were also experienced in their measurable intelligence. During the 1930s, a dominant psychological view was that intelligence 'was fixed at birth according to social and genetic factors'.⁵³ Blatz's views on intelligence differed from those of Cyril Burt (1883-1971), a leading British psychologist of intelligence in the period, but there is no evidence to date whether Blatz and Burt met or discussed each other's work. Burt was convinced that intelligence was primarily hereditary, arguing that social and environmental factors only played a secondary role in intellectual development. Blatz's approach was essentially developmental. Following Burt's death, striking anomalies in some of his test data led to the re-examination of his statistical methods and to the conclusion that he had probably manipulated and falsified those results to support his own theories.⁵⁴

Traditionally pre-school education was expected to encourage healthy personality development and not to increase the intelligence of the child. Blatz was not concerned with the question of intelligence until controversial research carried out by Beth Wellman in the United States challenged the view that intelligence was

⁵² Ibid., p. 249.

⁵³ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁵⁴ Mazumdar, P. M. H., 'Burt, Sir Cyril Lodowic (1883 -1971)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: August 8, 2016).

changeless.⁵⁵ The programme at Garrison Lane provided the Canadian Team with an opportunity to try to replicate Wellman's findings.⁵⁶ Larry Prochner and Nina Howe suggest:

Blatz took advantage of a naturalistic experiment to test the theoretical views about the malleability of children's IQ and his findings would have provided further early support for the view that environment plays a large role in children's intellectual development.⁵⁷

Wright was responsible for carrying out Stanford-Binet tests on the children at regular intervals.⁵⁸ Stanford-Binet testing was used to measure intelligence based on the following five factors of cognitive ability: fluid reasoning, knowledge, quantitative reasoning, visual-spatial processing, and working memory. Each factor was tested in two separate domains, verbal and nonverbal.⁵⁹ Traditionally, intelligence testing has been used as a means of classifying children by ability, but measuring intelligence is controversial and subject to debate and criticism.⁶⁰ Margaret White and Alfred Hall suggest intelligence tests lack a strong theoretical base and test scores are subject to serious misinterpretations. Intelligence test performance is interpreted on a normative scale and test scores are a measure of learned behaviour and reflect cultural biases.⁶¹ They test what those who create tests think intelligence is. Intelligence testing is not something that is objective but, it is determined by culture.

⁵⁵ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Stanford Binet Test [Online], <http://www.stanfordbinet.net> (Accessed: March 11, 2014). A useful brief history of the test is provided by: Becker, K. A., *History of the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales: Content and Psychometrics* (USA, 2003).

⁶⁰ Wellman, B., 'Some Misconceptions about Intelligence', *Childhood Education* (1944), volume 21, issue 3, pp. 108-112.

⁶¹ White, M. B. and Hall, A. E., 'An overview of intelligence testing', *Phi Delta Kappa International* (Summer, 1980), volume 58, issue 4, pp. 210-216.

Even though controversial the Canadian team was prepared to use intelligence testing as a baseline for their wartime study as the evidence suggests.⁶²

Data and findings from the study at Garrison Lane were not published in scientific journals; however, the effect of the pre-school programme on the IQ scores of those children tested showed positive changes. The children made substantial gains (more than 10-15 points) in IQ over a 10-month period: 'These findings would suggest that the nursery school environment had a significant impact on their intellectual skills.'⁶³ The results of these tests indicated that children from these working-class families had the mental capacity to learn but did not always know how to utilise it. Wright thought that the development of these children was 'like having a chest of gold that couldn't be opened. It was the motivation and the persistence that they were developing at school'.⁶⁴ Following these results the team was keen to promote its system of nursery education as beneficial to all children.⁶⁵

One additional problem for Blatz and his team was that they were working in a war zone; they were subjected to their first bombing one night in August 1942. Blatz described how:

sitting in the shelter and hearing the bombs and the flack (*sic*) nearer and further away is an experience that, having come through it safely, one might consider an exciting memory, but one is not desirous of having it repeated.⁶⁶

⁶² Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

As this had been a night raid the nursery was closed but Blatz admitted to having a heavy feeling of responsibility for his team because of the dangerous position in which they found themselves. Garrison Lane like other wartime nurseries had a shelter and the team devised a method of moving the children there. Air raid drills were held at least three times a week when the children marched to the darkened reinforced shelter room on the ground floor, to the piano accompaniment of a nursery tune, 'Polly Perkins'. The same music was always played so the children would recognise it and not become alarmed.⁶⁷ Nursery attendance was poor the day after one air raid, but Blatz, Wright and Harris visited as many of the families as they could. Fortunately, none of them had suffered damage but the three saw the results of the bombing which Blatz said would remain indelible in his memory: 'What impressed us most was the quiet calm of the people and the stubborn [e]fficiency with which they were repairing their homes.'⁶⁸ The Canadian Team's connection with the local people was extending beyond the context of school life.

Garrison Lane was also a perfect opportunity for Blatz to study the effect of the blitz on children; he established that because they did not understand the full significance of the bombing, they responded less intensely than adults. The blitz experiences of twenty-three Garrison Lane Nursery children were recorded, as shown in chart 6.2. According to Blatz's findings, none of these children had shown adverse after-effects from their experiences by the time *Understanding the Young Child* was published in 1944. Even though all of the children at the nursery had been through at least one

⁶⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *Evening Telegram*, 'Women in War' (October 17, 1942).

⁶⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

air raid and the older children had experienced even more, the practice siren was often ignored. Blatz considered that children placed in residential nursery schools often showed more 'residual fear responses', attributing these largely to the loss of their parents and not to the actual bombing experience.⁶⁹

THE BLITZ EXPERIENCES OF TWENTY-THREE NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN ¹ IN GARRISON LANE				
Age of Child in July, 1942.		Number of times blitzed out of Home		Time spent sleeping in
		Temporarily.	Permanently.	Shelter. Cellar or under Stairs at Home.
yrs.	mths.			
2	0		1	1 year.
2	3	1		17 weeks.
2	3		1	1 year.
2	3	1		1 year.
2	6		1	17 weeks.
2	6			
2	6		1	17 weeks.
2	8		1	17 weeks.
3	2	1		1 year.
3	3		1	
3	3			1 year.
3	6			
3	8		1	1 year.
3	9	1		
4	1	2		6 months
4	1			10 weeks.
4	1			
4	2			17 weeks.
4	3			
4	4		1	17 weeks.
4	4			1 year.
4	4			1 year.
4	6	1		

Chart 6.2: Results of the blitz experiences of children attending Garrison Lane Nursery⁷⁰

While daytime routines were being established to alleviate some of the physical problems experienced by the children, those involved were learning a new language. The children and families began to understand Canadian while the team were

⁶⁹ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp.140-141.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

learning 'Birminghamese' but not without incident. Blatz thought one mother collecting her child was asking for 'Aged Robinson'. None the wiser after asking the mother to repeat her child's name three times, Blatz went through the register with another team member, eventually deciding it might be Edith Plumpton – it was.⁷¹ On another occasion Blatz, sitting in the senior playroom and seeing the milk tray approaching said, 'Here comes the milk'. One small girl said 'willeefitchmemoog' and rushed out of the door with Blatz following her. He discovered she was helpfully getting her mug from the washroom, not realising mugs were in both places and she was entitled to both.⁷²

Visitors came from as far as the USA and West Africa. The visitor books revealed that Garrison Lane attracted educationalist Lillian de Lissa (1885-1967) of Gipsy Hill Training College, and Gwen Chesters (1905-1996), Lecturer in Child Psychology at the Tavistock Clinic, London.⁷³ Departments of education and health both centrally and locally were well represented, along with executives from the National Union of Teachers, who were keen to see this establishment in action.⁷⁴ Interest in the team also led to invitations to events which were probably not extended to other wartime nursery workers. Shortly after their arrival, the Canadians were presented to and welcomed by Ernest Brown, the Minister of Health at Whitehall. They received special invitations to attend the University of Birmingham Congregation at which

⁷¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Gipsy Hill Training College for teachers of young children. Jones, H., 'Lillian Daphne de Lissa (1885-1967)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* [Online], Australian National University, <http://adb.any.ed.au> (Accessed: October 21, 2016); *The Evening Chronicle*, 'Eminent lecturers for Durham' (May 24, 1939), p. 9. Gwendolen Chesters married Dr Barnett Stross, author of a pamphlet on Nursery Education for the Fabian Society in 1963. *Ancestry* [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019).

⁷⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Garrison Lane Visitor books 1 and 2.

Canadian, General McNaughton, and Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador, received honorary degrees.⁷⁵ Blatz considered he was 'travelling in high society' when invited by Lady Astor to spend the weekend at Cliveden with fellow guests, playwright George Bernard Shaw and Ambassador Koo.⁷⁶ The team received visits from a variety of people. Many were keen to witness the project and distribute knowledge of their work; however, not everyone approved of their contribution. Wright related how many visitors would call the Canadians behaviourists, which she said they definitely were not 'because these little kids had brains and they were making choices all the time. We couldn't shape them but we could work with them'. One unidentified famous visitor suggested that they should not be working with the children in this way because it did not fit into their culture. Wright thought it an interesting experience, adding how they had to explain where they fit in psychologically: 'We were basically psychologists rather than educators and whatever we were doing was based on our theory.'⁷⁷ Once the children settled into their nursery environment, they seemed to progress quickly: this was evidenced by the results of Stanford-Binet tests which were carried out by Wright, as discussed earlier in this chapter.⁷⁸

Officially, the progress of the Garrison Lane children was not followed up after the war. That had not been part of Blatz's proposal and Wright hinted that most

⁷⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11. General McNaughton (1887-1996) was also a scientist, engineer and diplomat. IEEE Canada, 'Biography of General A G L McNaughton' [Online], <http://www.ieee.canadianfoundation.org> (Accessed: December 9, 2016).

⁷⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (August 8, 1942).

⁷⁷ *Wood Interviews*, Mary J Wright (December 9, 2013).

⁷⁸ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

government agencies were not sufficiently far-sighted to undertake such follow-up.⁷⁹

The reality of the situation probably did not offer the time, staff or finance to follow things through. Wright did keep in contact with some of the families and felt that the children had improved but she believed it would be difficult to prove whether any enhancements were related to their Garrison Lane experience. The project with Birmingham wartime pre-school children was unique and Wright believed that the work carried out at Garrison Lane could not be replicated anywhere in Canada.⁸⁰

Parents were encouraged to observe the work carried out in the nursery so they could learn from watching and continue to work with their children when the Canadian Team left.⁸¹ The team wanted the legacy of its work to continue. Blatz described 'Parent education' as 'the term applied to a plan for teaching parents how to fulfil the more important obligation of parenthood, the rearing of children'.⁸² Childrearing was a responsibility he considered should be shared by both parents. He was surprised that this serious subject of childrearing had never been taken through the formal channels of education.⁸³ Parent sessions at Garrison Lane were an important aspect of Blatz's work. Miss Bridgeoak, ex-president of the Birmingham Association of the National Union of Teachers, considered that 'the complete co-

⁷⁹ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁸² Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), p. 261.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

operation between the team and the parents was an outstanding feature of the work'.⁸⁴ Education extended beyond the children.

Originally, parents were looking to the nursery for childcare while they worked but their expectations began to change as they saw the experience moulding their child for the future. Not all parents immediately realised the importance of cooperating with the nursery routine or what this meant for their child, sometimes requiring more guidance. The mother of one child, whose attendance was unsatisfactory, was shown a chart indicating the progress made by other children who attended regularly. It was suggested that if she expected her child to obtain the full benefit from attending, she should make more effort in getting her child to school. Not only did the boy's attendance improve but his father began to attend the parent sessions.⁸⁵ Blatz and his team showed parents how to assist their child's all-round development. As part of the project at the Toronto Institute of Child Study, Blatz expected the parents of children attending St George's Nursery to enrol and attend his courses.⁸⁶ The Toronto parents were from academia and affluent classes, whereas the parents of children attending Garrison Lane Nursery worked long hours and lived in the midst of war. Realising the insistence on parents attending courses such as those carried out in Toronto would not work in Birmingham, Blatz used a different approach. Families were welcomed into the observation rooms and in the classroom if they wanted to attend.⁸⁷ Originally, the parents were uncomfortable as they felt that the Canadians were better educated than they were, but the team continued to

⁸⁴ *Birmingham Post*, 'The capacity of children' (September 28, 1942), p. 2.

⁸⁵ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), p. 265.

⁸⁶ Volpe, R., A Brief History of the Dr Erik Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto [Online], <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca> (Accessed: March 12, 2014).

⁸⁷ *Wood Private Collection*, Correspondence from Mary J Wright to Lorraine Wood (January 28, 2014).

encourage them. They observed that the parents gradually began to feel at home in the place.⁸⁸ Parents' meetings which attracted both mothers and fathers were described as successful in the nursery logbook, where Blatz put on talks on subjects such as temper tantrums.⁸⁹ Treated as equals by the team, the parents began to respond, they learnt by watching, going home and translating what they had seen into action.⁹⁰ Tea, sandwiches and buns were served after the meetings, presumably to attract parents and provide a relaxed atmosphere.⁹¹ According to a report in a local newspaper, the families formed themselves into what was reported to be a very helpful association.⁹²

Wright described the families as co-operative, hardworking, warm and appreciative. The Canadian Team 'became very interested in them as they were in us'.⁹³ Families of children attending the nursery began to learn how and why the Canadians did what they did. She felt that 'by and large' they found the parents 'intelligent'.⁹⁴ However, it is not clear how the Canadian Team dealt with one incident where two mothers had to be separated when fighting because one child coughed over another in the playground.⁹⁵ Internalisation from the parents was taking place about how illnesses could be spread.

⁸⁸ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁸⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (June 3 and 16, 1943).

⁹⁰ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

⁹¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (June 3 and 16, 1943).

⁹² *Birmingham Post*, 'Regional Production Boards' (July 1, 1942), p. 3.

⁹³ *Wood Private Collection*, Correspondence from Mary J Wright to Lorraine Wood (January 28, 2014).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (April 22, 1943).

Success of the parent sessions should not only be considered in the numbers attending but also by the results. Blatz had asked one mother if her three-year-old boy went to bed early: 'Oh, yes, she said, he goes to bed regular at 10.30 just after he's had his beer and chips'.⁹⁶ One of the parent sessions discussed the importance of a good sleeping routine and how the school could help mothers by putting good habits of rest in place.⁹⁷ The parents were eager and the children were sent to bed earlier.⁹⁸

Conversely, even the children at Garrison Lane tried to pass on their newly acquired skills to their parents. Nurse Ingram reported Jimmy at home with his mother saying: 'I should wash my hands before I have my dinner'. Statements similar to this had continued for the whole day and 'His mother said he was a perfect nuisance!'⁹⁹ The children had learned new skills and were educating their parents.

At the same time as settling the children into the nursery, Blatz and his team prepared for their first intake of CCR students. During his introduction at the Birmingham and Three Counties branch of the Royal College of Nursing Conference in 1942, Mr F T Arnold, H M Inspector, Board of Education, explained how wartime nursery schools had to be staffed largely by people who have not received full formal training and explained how the success of these schools would depend on the

⁹⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, 'Canadians tackle the slums' (November 7, 1942).

⁹⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

⁹⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

⁹⁹ Scott, P., *They Made Invasion Possible* (London, 1944), p. 127.

efficiency of the emergency training.¹⁰⁰ Blatz and the Canadian Team played a significant part in this process. Courses for CCR students began at Garrison Lane a few days after the original intake of children to the nursery, will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Blatz and his team intended to work with the families in the nursery but were probably not expecting this to extend into their homes.¹⁰¹ The grubby state of the children and their clothes concerned the Canadians and they began their mission by spreading the 'gospel of cleanliness'.¹⁰² Blatz wished Hincks could see a sample of the underwear worn by some of the children but felt in their present state that they 'would have to be hermetically sealed' before posting. He suggested that if washed, 'they would fall to pieces for lack of cohesive union'.¹⁰³ Lady Reading, Midland Regional Child Care Advisor for the Ministry of Health, unofficially arranged for two sets of clothing for each child.¹⁰⁴ The clothes were only for use while in the nursery, but Blatz explained how the team felt uncomfortable putting pristine outfits on dirty

¹⁰⁰ *Birmingham Post*, 'Nursery Schools' (October 22, 1942), p. 2.

¹⁰¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

¹⁰³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942).

¹⁰⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11. The Marchioness of Reading was Chairman of the Council of the National Society of Day Nurseries and the midland regional advisor on wartime child care. Lady Reading's wartime office was based at the Ministry of Health Regional Offices, 139 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. She was the founder of the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS which later became the WRVS). The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Lady Reading fails to mention her contribution to wartime childcare. TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Minding the children' (February 26, 1942), p. 241; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence between Lady Reading and Miss Puxley (November 27, 1942); Windlesham, 'Isaacs (nee Charnaud), Stella, Marchioness of Reading and Baroness Swansborough (1894-1971), founder of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: August 10, 2013).

children so another procedure was included in the schedule – a weekly scrubbing.¹⁰⁵ This involved soaking eight children every morning in suds from top to toe. Blatz thought they had never been in a bathtub before, describing how from their struggles, two children must have thought they were going to be drowned. Team member, Anne Harris described the children as being ‘pretty upset’ the first time they were bathed, with one sounding ‘just like a siren’, but they began to take pride in their personal appearance.¹⁰⁶ The team thought there were now more blondes than there had been previously. While the children were probably feeling more comfortable, the process encouraged some of the children’s insect inhabitants to leave for more comfortable quarters – the Canadian Team.¹⁰⁷

Clothing for the children was a significant problem throughout the war. One child came to Garrison Lane nursery school every morning with eight safety pins holding his clothes on. His mother was told she could keep one set of clothes if she kept them clean. The following day he had not only slept in the clothes but the boy told staff his mother would not let him get out of bed when he needed the ‘lav’ [lavatory] in her effort to keep them clean.¹⁰⁸ Spare children’s pants were held at the nursery in case of accidents but the children’s own ‘accident pants’ had to be washed and dried by ironing otherwise the children had to go home *au naturel* or the team lost a pair of

¹⁰⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942).

¹⁰⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

¹⁰⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942).

pants.¹⁰⁹ Forty new smocks were delivered to the school for the children from the WVS via the Lady Mayoress's Depot. Blatz reported that the Canadian Team were so thrilled by this acquisition it 'was as if each member of the staff had been presented with a new fur coat'.¹¹⁰ International as well as local support was received of donations of clothes, shoes, toys and sweets which were shipped to Birmingham from the Australian Women's Institute and Havergal Old Girls Club, Toronto.¹¹¹ Some of these items were also shared with other local wartime nurseries.¹¹²

The Canadian experts were not critical of the children's families and recognised that they were living under extremely difficult conditions. The physical state of their housing, which dated from the Victorian era, was not improved by wartime bombing raids. Blatz explained how similar areas in Canada and America were considered places where the 'unfit and degenerate live'. He thought this was not the case in Britain:

These are not degraded areas but degrading areas. These people are not mentally or morally low. They are simply people living in cramped, unhealthy surroundings where they have no hope... Adding he did not: blame them for the condition of their children, because in their crowded homes there is little chance for decency, none for privacy.¹¹³

Blatz and his team did not consider that these families were degenerates and felt that they were able to do something to help improve their lives. In

¹⁰⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Blatz to daughter Gery (July 4, 1942).

¹¹⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11. The Lady Mayoress's Depot, Birmingham opened in Broad Street, November 8, 1939. Over sixteen thousand overalls were made for wartime nurseries in Birmingham by approximately sixty sewing parties in different districts of the city. Vaudrey, H. C., *The Lady Mayoress's Depot, Birmingham, 1939-1945* (Birmingham, 1952).

¹¹¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (July 23 and September 24, 1943).

¹¹² LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (March 27, 1944).

¹¹³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, 'Canadians tackle the slums' (November 7, 1942).

correspondence with Hincks, Blatz recounted one visit to the home of two Garrison Lane children:

Two of the children, brother and sister, were so obviously infested that before other than expedient measures could be adopted Dr Beaumont and myself visited the home. The family consists of the grandfather, mother and father and three children under five. They live in three rooms in a blitzed block of slum houses. The kitchen and dining-room combined are on one side of a brick paved court, slimy with refuse. Across the court are two bedrooms in the lower floor of a partly blitzed section which prior to the war must have been very little different. The grandfather sleeps in a small anti-chamber (*sic*) and all five of the others sleep in a double bed and a small cot. There is no other furniture, the windows are boarded up, one can only see by artificial light. The sanitary facilities are across the court 40' away. In rainy weather the sewage oozes up from an open drain outside the kitchen. It was obvious, with the sleeping arrangements as they were, that infestation could only be coped with by a general cleansing. This was done by the mother reporting at the school, after hours, and the nurse staying overtime and applying the requisite remedies.¹¹⁴

His comments display a mix of sympathy and disgust, but he tried to alleviate the children's problem in the only way he could, by displaying a sense of responsibility towards them not only in the school but the home. He was conscious that the degrading conditions in which he believed the families were living would affect the implementation of the team's ideas. However, they were unable to influence home conditions directly.

With the nursery and training sessions settled, Blatz, Millichamp, Fletcher and Harris prepared to return to Canada to help create wartime nurseries in Toronto.¹¹⁵ In their

¹¹⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹¹⁵ Blatz travelled between Toronto and Birmingham as work commitments would allow to support and manage the project at Garrison Lane. Millichamp was seconded to act as supervisor and advisor in setting up wartime nurseries in Toronto. Fletcher worked in a wartime Nursery Demonstration and

first two months they had managed to 'learn a great deal about Birmingham, and appreciate more than we ever expected the mothers and children of a slum area in England'.¹¹⁶ Relationships had been formed and the project foundations had been laid by the first group. Despite the good intentions of the Canadians and their degree of success, they still saw the local inhabitants in a negative light. This was apparent in the use of words like 'slum' and from Blatz's language in his informative letter to Hincks.

Blatz mentioned more than once in his correspondence to Hincks how fortunate they were in the women chosen for the Garrison Lane Project.¹¹⁷ The Canadians worked long hours under difficult conditions – Harris claiming that they had never worked so hard.¹¹⁸ At the end of September 1942, Blatz reported on the state of the team: 'We are all tired, happy, pepped up, a little edgy and more than satisfied that we have done the best we can.'¹¹⁹ Millichamp considered that their main difficulties were the lack of equipment and the problem of planning a daily routine programme that was commensurate with the limited staff and space.¹²⁰ Harris found there were just too many people. Having forty students all the time was an 'awful trial' and she found that constantly being pleasant to the visitors was 'very tiring'. She thought that the

Training Centre in Toronto. TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19 (October, 1942), p. 19.

¹¹⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹¹⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

¹¹⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942).

¹¹⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

¹²⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *Evening Telegram*, 'Women in War' (October 17, 1942).

children were great, that most mothers were making an effort, and that if an observer looked in the playroom, they would not be able to tell the children from those at St George's Nursery in Toronto. The children were not used to being told stories, so Harris found it interesting reading books to them such as those from the Peter Rabbit series. A particular favourite of the youngsters was *Little Black Sambo*, considered an inappropriate title now.¹²¹ This book by Helen Bannerman tells of a little boy who had the fine new clothes made for him by his mother and shoes provided by his father, all stolen by tigers. The story eventually goes full circle until he gets his clothes back.¹²² Perhaps the children could relate their nursery experience to this story as new clothes were provided in the morning but taken away at the end of each day only to be returned the following morning. Details of the books used by the children attending St George's Nursery plus additions used at Garrison Lane Nursery are listed in appendix 5.

Security at Garrison Lane was not entirely childproof, and this in turn highlighted how at least one mother registered her child at more than one nursery. Three children on two occasions are recorded as managing to leave the centre unaccompanied. In the first incident the two mothers of the two children were advised the same evening that their children had managed to leave the premises but had been found safely elsewhere.¹²³ The nursery logbook records a second incident in which one small boy managed to leave the school and make his way home. During the investigation which followed, it was revealed that he was also registered to attend Deritend

¹²¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942).

¹²² *Project Gutenberg*, Bannerman, H., 'Little Black Sambo' [Online], <http://www.gutenberg.org> (Accessed: November 29, 2016).

¹²³ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (May 11, 1944).

Nursery.¹²⁴ Whether he attended both nurseries is not indicated. Why he was registered at two schools or what could be gained from this practice is unclear. However, it raises questions about the administration of this wartime provision.

The only financial responsibility of parents with children attending wartime nurseries was payment for meals, but there were still instances of non-payment by some families. It is not clear whether these parents were unable or simply chose not to pay. Birmingham wartime wages were high, particularly in the shadow factories, and this was what attracted most mothers of young children into the workplace.¹²⁵ Small donations were sometimes received from Canada intended for the mothers and children of Garrison Lane, and these usually helped to cover some of the smaller debts.¹²⁶ The Canadian team's project extended beyond the context of school life by moving into the private space of the children's homes.

The local and national impact of Blatz and his team

The work of the team moved beyond the confines of Garrison Lane Training Centre and into the home, however, this section explores whether the work of the Canadian team extended even further. During his visit to England in 1941 Blatz had been struck by what he believed to be the inadequate teaching methods of many nursery workers.¹²⁷ From the beginning of the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre project in July 1942, Blatz accepted opportunities to lecture and share the knowledge gained

¹²⁴ Ibid. (August 16, 1943).

¹²⁵ Sutcliffe, A. and Smith, R., *History of Birmingham, volume III, Birmingham 1939-1970* (London, 1974), p. 46; BMT (TSM), Spitfire Gallery Project, OH 1384, Interview Christine Haig (2015).

¹²⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (July 23, 1943); LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/36, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1944).

¹²⁷ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 201.

from his experiences in both the UK and Canada. When in Toronto he described how psychological anxiety was a greater peril than the physical damage caused by the Blitz in Britain. He explained how the 'war time state had intervened to ensure an equitable distribution of health care, food and education' and how civilian morale was boosted by the knowledge that children would be given every possible chance to develop their potential in wartime nurseries.¹²⁸ Toronto's wartime nursery provision was not established until Blatz and his three senior advisers returned after setting up the Garrison Lane Project at the end of August 1942.

In the UK, Blatz received so many invitations to lecture around the country that by mutual agreement, the Education Department guided Blatz towards the places it considered would gain the most advantage from his time and experience. For example, it considered the Devon Education Authority to be progressive and a visit from Blatz would be a good use of his time and do much to further the cause of Nursery Education in the South-West of England.¹²⁹ Conversely, the Education Department suggested that an invitation from a teacher in Goole, Yorkshire, to speak to her parents' association be turned down as her school did not have facilities for children under five, and so it was not worth the trouble of a long and inconvenient journey for Blatz.¹³⁰

Blatz's knowledge was spread far and wide as he conducted a course on 'Child Development and its effect on Nursery School Education' for the Nursery School

¹²⁸ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 165.

¹²⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, Correspondence to Blatz from E. R. W. Sage, Child Care Division of the Board of Education (August 31, 1942).

¹³⁰ Ibid. (August 5, 1942).

Association's Summer School of 1942 in Oxford.¹³¹ In late 1942 the BBC Home Service broadcast a series on 'Bringing Up Children' in which Blatz featured prominently.¹³² And 'An Experiment in Parent Co-operation in Toronto' was the subject of his talk given at two Nursery School Association summer schools in 1943.¹³³

Blatz, together with Birmingham Health and Education authorities, recognised the unique opportunity this war had presented for influencing future elementary education. They jointly took advantage of the situation by providing new training opportunities in addition to those required to meet a wartime necessity. One of the earlier Garrison Lane courses was for forty matrons (trained nurses) to be placed in charge of a war nursery. None had taken psychology courses in their previous training and local authorities were anxious to rectify the situation. It was thought that attendance on Blatz's course would make them more sympathetic towards the psychological aspects of their role. Excited at the prospect, Blatz reported this course as 'the first attempt at reconciling Health and Education'.¹³⁴

Local teachers asked Blatz to organise a significant two-week course for forty-two Birmingham infant school head teachers. He explained to Hincks how 'as nursery schools are now part of the Elementary School system, they [local educationalists] are more than anxious to find out all they can'. To release such a large number of

¹³¹ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Summer School' (May 14, 1942), p. 437.

¹³² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 2, British Broadcasting Corporation contract for 'Bringing Up Children' (September 22, 1942); Efforts to obtain original recordings or scripts have been unsuccessful.

¹³³ TBL, Lou.Lon 278, *Nursery World*, 'Summer School' (June 17, 1943), p. 525.

¹³⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

head teachers with staff shortages during the hostilities must have been complex. However, Blatz described how the Birmingham Department of Education took this 'cataclysmic step' in 'its stride'.¹³⁵ Dorothy Walker of St Peter's Infant School, Harborne, was particularly keen to attend. Walker was one of the few women head teachers in Birmingham; she promoted progressive educational practices and had already attended one of Blatz's 1942 lectures.¹³⁶ Education committee minutes reported how the course was found to have been of particular value.¹³⁷ These head teachers suggested to Birmingham authorities that heads of Junior Schools should also have an opportunity to take the course.¹³⁸ Whether that suggestion was implemented is unclear; however, knowledge obtained by these infant head teachers probably filtered into the education system. It is impossible to ascribe any specific part of the pre-school education system to Blatz, although Wright considers that there was a continuity of some attributes. The American, Lillian Weber, spent one and a half years observing and analysing British state schools for young children, considering the practice, process, history and theory of informal education. Her study was carried out between September 1965 and May 1966 at English nursery and infant schools in London, Birmingham and Bristol.¹³⁹ Wright believed that 'Blatz's favourite terms [*sic*] (e.g., serenity) are prominent' in Weber's study and that the Plowden report in 1967 'had much in common with the type of education Blatz

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ CRL, MS806/1, Letters from Dorothy Walker to Stanley Chamberlain (1942, 1943).

¹³⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/35, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1943).

¹³⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

¹³⁹ Weber, L., *The English Infant School and Informal Education* (New Jersey, 1971).

promoted'.¹⁴⁰ The Canadian, Mary Salter Ainsworth (1913-1999), was employed in a research position at the Tavistock Clinic in an investigation directed by John Bowlby (1907-1990) in the early 1950s. Salter Ainsworth was a graduate of the University of Toronto and, at Blatz's suggestion, had undertaken her PhD dissertation research within the framework of his security theory.¹⁴¹ Attachment theory is based on the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Salter Ainsworth.¹⁴² Blatz published little about his theories and anything he did write was 'not great' according to his former student Canadian child psychologist, Mary Northway (1909-1987). Wright suggested; 'Ainsworth knows that her ideas come from Blatz, but she can't give him credit because nothing is published; that is, there is no definitive book containing his ideas'.¹⁴³ Blatz did attempt to record his work towards the end of his life but the project had to be completed by Mary Northway.¹⁴⁴

Collaboration also took place between Birmingham Children's Hospital and the Garrison Lane team to train fifty nurses to take charge of wartime residential nursery schools. The hospital course was combined with visits to Garrison Lane for observation and seminars. Blatz considered this to be another 'strategic course

¹⁴⁰ Wright, M. J., 'Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the Teachings of W. E. Blatz', in: Prochner, L. and Howe, N. (eds.), *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past, Present and Future* (Vancouver, 2000), pp. 96-114.

¹⁴¹ Salter Ainsworth, M., D, 'Mary D. Salter Ainsworth: An Autobiographical Sketch', *Attachment and Human Development* (2013), volume 15, issues 5-6, pp. 448-459.

¹⁴² Bretherton, I., 'The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth', *Developmental Psychology* (1992), vol 28, issue 5, pp. 759-775.

¹⁴³ Winestock, S. L., 'William Emet Blatz: The Development of a Developmental Psychologist', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (York University, Ontario, 1994).

¹⁴⁴ Blatz, W. E., *Human Security: Some Reflections* (Toronto, 1966).

because it was for the first time that a purely educational slant was given to this course which heretofore had been exclusively health'.¹⁴⁵

Personal accounts recall how Blatz met with academics at the University of Birmingham, such as Vice-Chancellor Raymond Priestley (1886-1974) and Charles Valentine (1879-1974), Professor of Education. Blatz was particularly excited by the University's dissecting room following a tour of the new Medical Building.¹⁴⁶ Even though Valentine was amenable to working with the team, evidence to date does not indicate whether the Canadians collaborated on projects with the University during their time in Birmingham.¹⁴⁷

At the conclusion of its two-year temporary contract, in February 1944, the Canadian Team was due to return home – in the summer. By July of the same year the Board of Education suggested to local authorities that they did not expect more proposals for nursery classes to be submitted.¹⁴⁸ Garrison Lane, in the same way as other emergency wartime childcare facilities, was originally set up as a temporary measure. As the end of the war was in sight, central officials turned their attention to how this service should be wound down rather than increased. The possibility of Garrison Lane continuing as a training centre and practising nursery following the Canadians' return was considered by Birmingham officials in March of the same year.

¹⁴⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.; CRL, US38/2/4. Priestley Diaries (August 26-September 3, 1942). Priestley was Vice Chancellor at the University of Birmingham from 1938-1952. Robin, G. d. Q., 'Priestley, Sir Raymond Edward (1886-1974)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: September 1, 2016).

¹⁴⁷ *Wood Private Collection*, Correspondence from Mary J Wright to Lorraine Wood (January 28, 2014).

¹⁴⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/36, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1944).

Birmingham Chief Education Officer, Mr P D Innes, reported on the excellent work carried out by the Canadian Team which had 'received recognition and appreciation throughout the Country'. Innes recognised that the training of child care reservists would still be required for the duration of the war; however, courses would be held less frequently. The positions of three of Blatz's team who, as part of an experimental collaboration discussed in Chapter 8, had worked with the Public Health wartime nurseries, would also become vacant. Innes and Dr Newsholme, Medical Officer of Health for Nursery Schools, liaised and submitted a proposal for Garrison Lane's future use.¹⁴⁹

Blatz and his team received many accolades from local and central government. Local educationalist, Alderman Byng Kenrick, described Blatz as 'a prophet', explaining how it was the 'task of prophets... to wake up the people' and he 'had succeeded in doing that', before going on to say that 'People past middle-age, however, had a habit of waking up, turning over and going to sleep again'.¹⁵⁰ In other words, he wanted nursery provision in the city to continue growing but was concerned it would be ignored. Mr P D Innes considered that the Canadians 'had done real war work by assisting to keep up the morale of the people in [the] Garrison Lane area, and they have done something the people will never forget'.¹⁵¹ Lady Reading reported how staff training at Garrison Lane was responsible for a marked improvement in the nursery work in the Midlands.¹⁵² Sir Wilson Jameson, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health, wrote: 'Dr Blatz and his colleagues have

¹⁴⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, 'Memorandum by the Chief of Education Officer' (March 23, 1944).

¹⁵⁰ *Birmingham Post*, 'The capacity of children' (September 28, 1942), p. 2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 201.

given the work the stimulus it sorely needed and the effects of their visit will be of permanent value.¹⁵³ However, it was not only officials who appreciated the Canadians' contribution. Parents of children attending Garrison Lane also acknowledged their support, as shown in Figure 6.4. This small note offers a rare example of evidence of the relationship between the Canadian Team and the parents of children attending Garrison Lane Nursery. It signified a positive response to their work with the children and indicated a good relationship with the parents.

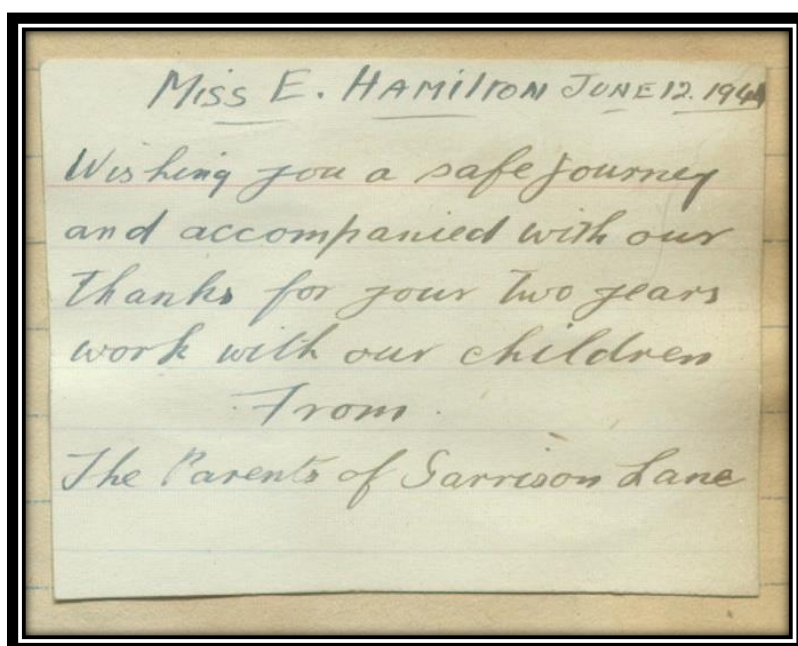


Figure 6.4: Thank-you note from Garrison Lane parents to Canadian Team member Eleanor Hamilton¹⁵⁴

Local officials arranged a presentation at the Council House as a mark of their appreciation for the Canadian women on June 30, 1944, the last day at Garrison Lane for some of the team.¹⁵⁵ From July 3 the centre was taken over by a new

¹⁵³ Internet Archive, 'University of Toronto Report of the Board of Governors, President's Report' (June 30, 1943) [Online], <http://www.archive.org> (Accessed: December 30, 2017).

¹⁵⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Eleanor Hamilton Scrapbooks 1 and 2.

¹⁵⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (June 30, 1944).

management team and was run as an English unit.¹⁵⁶ Two of the team did not return to Canada immediately: Joyce Cornish-Bowden continued to work at Garrison Lane until at least December 6, 1944 as a lecture demonstrator.¹⁵⁷ Although Nancy Griffin (Chapman) remained in the UK, evidence to date does not indicate whether she continued teaching during this time. By December 1944, the CCR training aspect of Garrison Lane was closed, and the nursery was taken over by one warden supervisor who was expected to manage five wartime nurseries.¹⁵⁸

A local newspaper reported that 102 children passed through the nursery from the opening of Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre on July 1 1942 to July 1 1944.¹⁵⁹ Children attending Garrison Lane Nursery School during this unique experiment had an opportunity to express their appreciation for the Canadian Team's support to Eleanor Hamilton nine years later when she made a return visit to the school. She can be seen with two of the children she taught (Figure 6.5) but was actually re-acquainted with more than twenty of the pupils during her visit.



Figure 6.5: Eleanor Hamilton returns¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. (July 3, 1944).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. (December 6, 1944).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. (December 22, 1944 and March 1, 1945).

¹⁵⁹ *Birmingham Post*, 'Regional Production Boards' (July 1, 1942), p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Left to right: Miss Lucy Ingram, Miss Eleanor Hamilton, Kevin Cornwall, of Garrison Lane (age 11) and Jacqueline Hancox of Wolesley Street (age 12). Formally, Lucy Ingram was the nurse appointed to work at Garrison Lane with the Canadian Team and remained in contact with Hamilton whom she visited in Canada in 1949. *Birmingham Gazette*, 'Miss Hamilton Remembers' (June 26, 1953), p. 3.

Whilst in Birmingham, Blatz's message was spread far and wide through various platforms such as lectures, courses, visitors and by collaboration with local educational and health departments and seemed to influence aspects of post-war education, such as the work of the Tavistock Clinic.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to answer two questions. Firstly, how did the team adapt and develop its Canadian approach in order for it to succeed in Birmingham by engaging with sections of society with which they had little experience? Secondly, how did Blatz and his Canadian Team's approach not only give impetus to Birmingham wartime pre-school childcare but also potentially influence post-war elementary education?

Blatz and the team managed to overcome many obstacles while working in Birmingham for example culture differences, the hostilities and complex administrative procedures. Throughout the chapter it is apparent that while in Britain, the Canadian team were comfortable and able to coexist with people at all class levels. Importantly, the team created a relationship with the working-class children and their parents, which enabled them to work with and study a class of people who had previously been alien to them, a group normally suspicious of those educated or in authority. Blatz and the team wanted to help but even so, it is clear that there remained differences in perceptions. The Canadians believed that they were bringing civilisation to working-class people who lacked the culture and behaviour patterns which the team deemed to be valuable. Even so, Blatz and his team did not

expect to live as the locals and received preferential treatment in terms of their accommodation shown to be provided by the local elite and the provision of private transport to the nursery by the LEA.

Local officials put their faith in Blatz's project, allowing him a high level of freedom. Blatz was at the pinnacle of his career and the team he selected to come to Birmingham had developed under his guidance. Because of this they were able to implement his ideas and theories quickly and efficiently. However reality did not always match the team's intentions. Plans were adapted and they found themselves moving into the sphere of the private space of home due to the families' unfavourable living conditions and the hostilities to assist the project's success. Even though this was not a scientific study, the team worked with working-class children who had never before accessed nursery education and they witnessed positive changes.

Those children attending Garrison Lane Nursery were not the only ones to benefit from this experimental project, the success and importance of which was far-reaching and included parents, students and the Canadians themselves. The study revealed how the team took every opportunity to share the knowledge gained, locally, nationally and in Toronto. Elements of Blatz's psychology were still evident in British primary education in the 1960s; however, this is hardly surprising as the team not only carried out training sessions for the CCR but also for elementary school teachers as well. Elements of Blatz's security theory probably found their way into Bowlby and Salter Ainsworth's attachment theory and Millichamp adapted the Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre model for Toronto's wartime nurseries when she returned home in August 1942. This Canadian Team provided wartime nurseries

and nursery education with the stimulus it required at a time when many were becoming war-tired. They showed the local community what nursery education was and how it might help their children, and in those terms, it seems that they achieved some measure of success.

When touring Birmingham in search of a suitable building, Blatz had the foresight to recognise how – with adaptations – Garrison Lane School could facilitate all of their particular requirements. There was a restricted choice of suitable buildings able to accommodate wartime nurseries. Chapters 7 and 8 considers the nature, material culture and staffing of these establishments as it endeavours to address the fourth key question: to what extent and in what ways did Birmingham's pre-school childcare system secure the buildings and internal features and shape the educational experiences (Chapter 7) and staffing (Chapter 8), it needed to operate effectively?

CHAPTER 7: NURSERY BUILDINGS: THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Birmingham officials had to create their own pre-school childcare scheme if local industries were to meet wartime production targets. Under wartime conditions it was impossible for local officials to plan the project in advance. Without knowing the number of nurseries required or how long the hostilities were likely to last, the provision evolved. Even though wartime pre-school childcare was likely to be a temporary expedient they had to ensure that buildings were available and able to last for several years. Birmingham's large-scale exercise was completed within the restraints of funding, shortages of buildings or land, building materials, experienced builders to carry out the work and bombing raids. Nursery education which was still early in its development was receiving attention locally, especially from the architect William Benslyn. The relationship between architectural spaces and pedagogy has become an area of academic interest. Paul Stock suggests in his history of the uses of space, that by 'considering the physicality of material practices, as well as ideas about space, historians can offer new perspectives on issues in cultural and intellectual history'.¹ Therefore, schools should not be viewed as simply structures in which education is located but they influence relationships and social behaviour. In their 2008 study, Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor explain how 'the design of school buildings, both the exterior shell and the interior ordering of spaces and furnishings, is in symbiotic relationship with ideas about childhood, education and community'. Designed spaces 'project a system of values' while 'the ways in which

¹ Stock, P. E., *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 1-25.

the buildings are used and experienced give them meaning'.² Overtly or covertly, the use of space within educational buildings or equipment can be used as a form of control and power. For example, government legislation for education has shaped schools and influenced their role in the community. Design features can be incorporated into buildings and objects that permit observation and surveillance allowing the control, ordering and the disciplining of children.³ For those who wish to pursue this subject, a general study of material culture and its meanings is provided by Ian Woodward.⁴

The chapter is a case study of the political, physical and material environment of Birmingham wartime nursery buildings to throw light on relationships and experiences within them. It seeks to address, alongside Chapter 8, the fourth key question: to what extent and in what ways did Birmingham's pre-school childcare system secure the buildings and internal features and shape the educational experiences (Chapter 7) and staffing (Chapter 8), it needed to operate effectively? The author analyses wartime nursery buildings, equipment and their influence not only on the children but the local environment. Through the interrogation of archive material, newspapers, journals and images including a private collection of Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre photographs, the study questions how and to what extent a system of wartime nursery provision developed in Birmingham between 1939 and 1945 by examining four relevant aspects. Firstly, how the system was created; secondly, the actual provision in terms of nursery buildings themselves; thirdly, the social relationships within these institutions and how they fit into the wider

² Burke, C., and Grosvenor, I., *School* (London, 2008), pp. 8-12.

³ Ibid., p.10.

⁴ Woodward, I., *Understanding Material Culture* (London, 2007).

environment; and fourthly, the way in which healthcare was an important component of what was provided.

The chapter achieves this by exploring early nursery architecture nationally and locally. It then proceeds to consider the reality of implementing central guidance when providing local wartime nurseries. Local provision is explored before moving on to discuss life within these nurseries and the environment they served. The health of those children attending nurseries is considered before drawing together the conclusions of this study.

Early nursery architecture

Experimental pre-school systems initiated ideas like ‘child-centred learning’, ‘open teaching’ and the ‘outdoor classroom’.⁵ Froebel’s system of learning is said to have ‘profoundly influenced the work of many architects in its three-dimensional manipulation of space and form’.⁶ Margaret McMillan in 1926 suggested the ideal nursery school as being a ‘garden city of children’ and a number of her design themes are still influential in the twenty-first century.⁷ However, McMillan’s ideas conflicted with those of many of her co-educationalists as her main concern focused on the health and welfare of the children rather than on their educational progress when attending.⁸ Even if these educational pioneers did not always agree, their influences clearly brought about a merging of progressive and architectural thinking in relation to nursery education.⁹

⁵ Dudek, M., *Nurseries: A Design Guide* (Oxford, 2013), p. 110.

⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 121-122.

⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

During the 1930s, progressive educators and architects began to consider how design could be used to stimulate child development.¹⁰ School buildings, and their various rooms, spaces, walls, windows, doors, furniture and outdoor spaces, shaped the experience of education. Prior to the Second World War, experimental approaches to school architecture were introduced in Birmingham, and Brearley Street Nursery School (Figure 7.1) created by William T Benslyn (1885-1947) was an example.¹¹

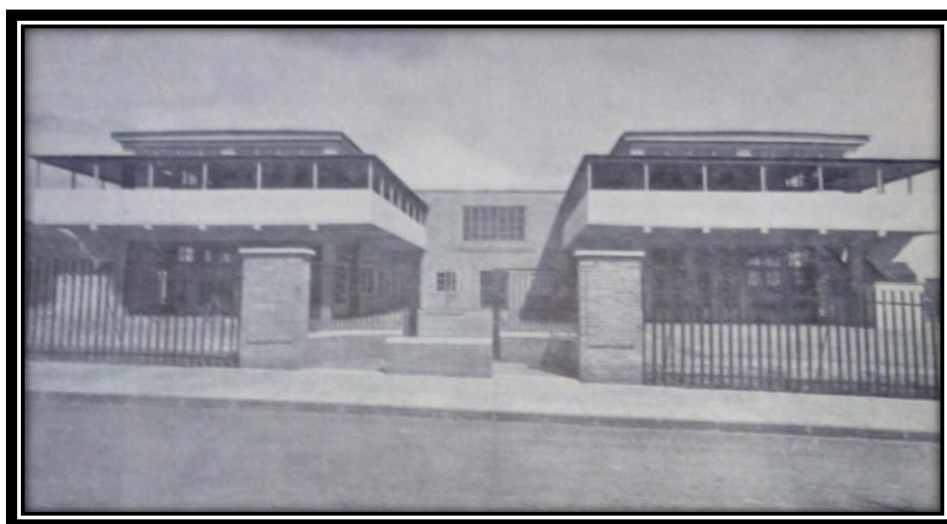


Figure 7.1: Brearley Street Nursery School, Hockley, Birmingham ¹²

After 1908, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), which were responsible for schools in local government areas, appointed salaried school architects.¹³ Benslyn designed at

¹⁰ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

¹¹ Benslyn qualified at the R.C.A. and worked for a time with Robert Atkinson, the architect of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, and followed H. T. Buckland as architect to the City of Birmingham Education Committee. Other buildings designed by Benslyn in Birmingham included Gaumont cinemas at Colmore Circus (1931) and Grove Lane, Smethwick (1934). Benslyn's designs for York Road School, Hall Green and Harborne Infant and Junior School (both circa 1938) differed greatly from those of Brearley Street Nursery School (see appendix 6). Hickman, D., *Birmingham: City Buildings* (London, 1970); Foster, A., *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham* (London, 2005); Royal Institute of British Architects [Online], <http://www.architecture.com> (Accessed: January 7, 2018).

¹² Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

¹³ Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools* (London, 1933), p. 38.

least two Birmingham cinemas before following H T Buckland into the role of architect for the city's Education Committee.¹⁴ Benslyn actually implemented William Blatz's ideas when converting Garrison Lane School into the Nursery School Training Centre in 1942.¹⁵ Blatz was impressed at the speed with which this adaptation was implemented under Benslyn's supervision.¹⁶ Benslyn's earlier Brearley Street Nursery School was distinctive within its local area which suffered from the hardships associated with poverty. This modernist building was strikingly different from the standard of housing surrounding it, conveying a message of how a new way of educating children required appropriate architecture.

Brearley Street was the first purpose-built LEA nursery school in Birmingham. Previous nurseries were either housed in adapted buildings or provided by the voluntary sector. Brearley Street nursery was built amidst nineteenth-century houses and workshops, as shown in Figure 7.2.

¹⁴ Royal Institute of British Architects [Online], <http://www.architecture.com> (Accessed: January 7, 2018); Foster, A., *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham* (London, 2005); Hickman, D., *Birmingham: City Buildings* (London, 1970).

¹⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (February 19, 1942); TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942). The alterations to Garrison Lane cost £1,798. LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945 (June 2, 1942).

¹⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).



Figure 7.2: Brearley Street, Birmingham
(Car and van models suggest this was taken in the late 1950s or early 1960s)¹⁷

The nursery's U-shaped, cream-and-yellow building, which still survives, was the first of its kind in Birmingham and architecturally was more adventurous than the two elementary schools Benslyn designed around the same time (appendix 6). It was designed to catch the sunlight and provide a stimulating environment for children. Douglas Hickman argues that Benslyn's buildings of the 1930s 'possess an originality which springs from an uninhibited examination of the functional requirements'.¹⁸ Another authority, Andy Foster describes how in the late 1930s, Benslyn's 'work moved from restrained modern to the concrete structure' displayed at Brearley Street

¹⁷ Drake, P., and Glasby, J., *Images of England: Newtown and Summer Lane* (Stroud, 2006), p. 118.

¹⁸ Hickman, D., *Birmingham: City Buildings* (London, 1970), p. 66.

Nursery School, where deep canopies and flying staircases made 'a radical statement not paralleled in the city for twenty years'.¹⁹ Foster described the school as 'Birmingham's first Modernist Building', more akin to schools of 1965 rather than of the 1930s.²⁰ Both authors recognise the uniqueness of Benslyn's design, which was different from other local authority purpose-built nurseries of the period.

Benslyn's ideas were influenced from abroad. An exhibition of the work of German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969), founder of the Bauhaus School of Design, toured to the city in 1934. The same year Gropius spoke with Birmingham architects at a meeting chaired by Benslyn, who was aware of the progressive and innovative architectural designs stemming from Germany.²¹ Award-winning architect Benslyn had displayed early ability and was the recipient of a national scholarship while studying architecture in Birmingham.²² By 1937, Benslyn and Gropius were designing nurseries, one in Birmingham, England, the other in Massachusetts, United States. Gropius' design (Figure 7.3) does not appear to have been built but displays the different approaches taken by these architects at the time. Gropius was not restricted by space in the same way as Benslyn was.

¹⁹ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018); Foster, A., *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham* (London, 2005), p. 30; *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Birmingham has ultra-modern school and doesn't know' (January 7, 1941), p. 3.

²⁰ Foster, A., *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Birmingham* (London, 2005), p. 178.

²¹ Grosvenor, I., 'The Art of Seeing: Promoting Design in Education in 1930s England', *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* (August, 2005), volume 41, issues 4 and 5, pp. 507-534. It is probable that this lecture was to the Birmingham Architectural Society of which Benslyn was President. Ibid; *The Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 'Benslyn Lecture' (February 17 and 22, 1943), p. 4, p. 3.

²² *The Morning Post*, 'Art Competition: Successful Candidates' (October 10, 1906), p. 5.

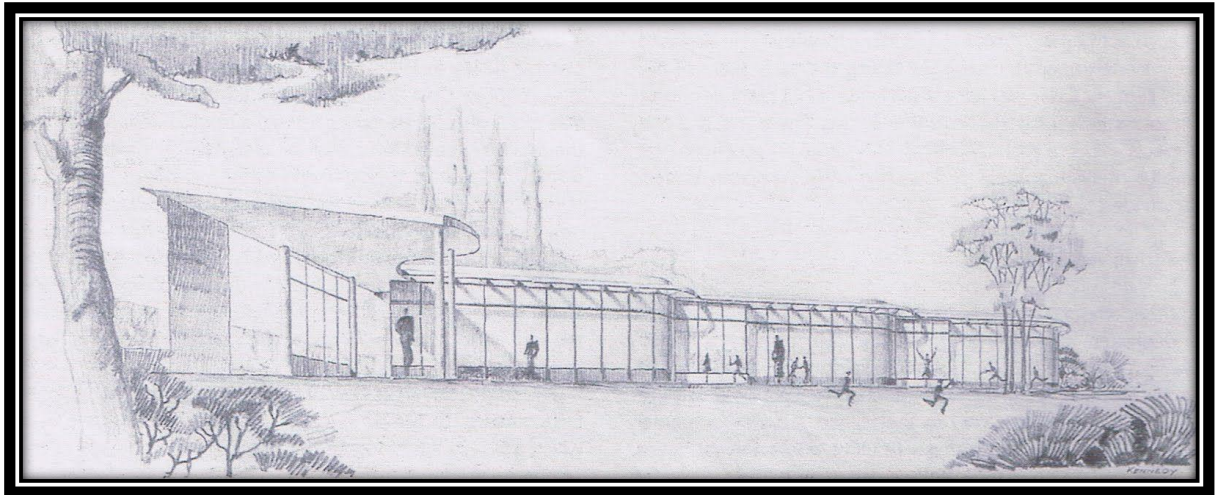


Figure 7.3: The Caryl Peabody Nursery School ²³

The Edith Cadbury Nursery School, a voluntary establishment also completed in 1939 (Figure 7.4), contrasted sharply with Brearley Street Nursery (Figure 7.1).

Following his study of nursery school problems, architect Mr S Alex Wilmot, employed by Bournville Village Trust, took a more conventional approach using a bungalow style for his design.²⁴



Figure 7.4: Edith Cadbury Nursery School, Weoley Castle, Birmingham ²⁵

²³ Harvard Museums, BRGA.81.5, 'Caryl Peabody Nursery School' [Online], <http://www.harvardmuseums.org> (Accessed: May 30, 2018) Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Walter Gropius, © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

²⁴ BVT, Heritage, Bournville Works Magazine, 'The Edith Cadbury Nursery School' (December, 1939), pp. 380-384. The author is grateful to Gillian Ellis, BVT Heritage Manager for providing a copy of this article.

²⁵ Wood Private Collection, 'A Day at a Nursery School' (Undated).

This building was intended to serve under-fives on a new housing estate where space was probably not such an issue as elsewhere in Birmingham and the building was in stylistic harmony with the brick-built council housing surrounding it, unlike Brearley Street Nursery.

Nursery provision was already part of Birmingham's education plan before the Second World War. Benslyn's 1937 design was originally intended for land purchased in the early 1930s on the corner of Heneage and Bloomsbury Street, Duddeston. However, although approval was granted for the Heneage Street project, when the Public Works Committee identified the site as part of the Duddeston and Nechells redevelopment scheme, land had to be found elsewhere.²⁶ Benslyn adapted his original plans to fit the corner of the Brearley and Hospital Street site. Four classes were planned for 160 children with an option to add another two classes at a later date, increasing places to 240.²⁷ The cost of the nursery building, heating and lighting installations, equipment and professional and incidental charges amounted to £13,000.²⁸ By backing this expensive project Birmingham officials were showing their commitment to innovative and distinctive pre-school education, where the constraints of costs were not at the forefront of their concern. Brearley Street Nursery's uniqueness makes it impossible to compare the cost of building this school with others being built in the same period, although one nursery built in Walthamstow in 1929 had cost £3,275.²⁹

²⁶ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, pp. 70, 74.

²⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/GG/D/1/7/1/1/51-2, Register of New Buildings, 68365, Nursery School, Heneage Street (1937) and 71597, Nursery School, Hospital Street (1938).

²⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/30, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (May 27, 1938).

²⁹ IOE, ME/L/2, Nursery School Association, 'Nursery School Buildings and Equipment' part 1 (1930).

Brearley Street Nursery School was due to open its doors in September 1939, but unfortunately the young children of the district had already been evacuated and the new facility was not put to use until later in the war.³⁰ At the time, though, it was photographed and discussed in architectural journals.³¹ The image used in these journals (Figure 7.1) displays the nursery's uniqueness in terms of design, but by excluding the surrounding buildings, it fails to reveal a true picture of the locality it was to serve (Figure 7.2). Although both were completed in 1939 the design of Brearley Street Nursery School (Figure 7.1) suggests not only a modernist approach to nursery buildings but also to pre-school education compared to that of the less innovative Edith Cadbury Nursery School building (Figure 7.4). What is more difficult to assess is how education differed in these two schools as a result of the different designs, or how wartime nurseries managed by Public Health contrasted to those run by the Education Department.

Wartime nursery buildings: guidance versus reality

The challenges of increasing nursery buildings during the hostilities were complex: how converting official guidance into a usable local service is explored in this section. In December 1941 the Ministries of Health and Labour estimated that nationally 1,500 nurseries were required and by June 1944, when the necessity for nurseries reached its peak, there were 1,560 full-time and part-time nurseries in operation in England and Wales.³² Local officials predicted that more than one hundred nurseries

³⁰ *The Birmingham Gazette*, 'Birmingham has ultra-modern school and doesn't know' (January 7, 1941), p. 3.

³¹ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018); IOE, ME/L/2, *The Architect and Building News* (February 14, 1941), pp. 124-125.

³² TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries',

would be required.³³ In Birmingham by July 1944 there were approximately 283 nurseries in operation, managed either by local public health or education departments.³⁴ This was well over the original estimate of one hundred nurseries. Considering the magnitude of the project, therefore, how did local officials execute this task?

Birmingham officials were in the difficult position of recognising the necessity for a wartime nursery scheme in their area before central government provided any guidance or financial support. When compared with other cities, Birmingham was a pioneer in the development of nurseries, and this should have made the challenge easier for local government but instead they found themselves restricted until central officials accepted financial responsibility.³⁵ Once full funding was approved, some pressure was relieved and expansion of the nurseries in the city began to increase rapidly, though Dr Ethel Cassie, Birmingham's Senior Assistant Medical Officer of Health, reported that the intention was never to provide ideal wartime nurseries but to supply the necessary minimum to keep children well and happy.³⁶

part 2, pp. 7-8.

³³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (December 18, 1941).

³⁴ The author reached this total by amalgamating data available for Birmingham wartime day nurseries, nursery schools or classes, aided nurseries and factory nurseries.

³⁵ Birmingham was already well advanced in maternity and child welfare services and was not hesitant about increasing its nursery provision. It was the lack of funding which had been restrictive. Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 184. It was Birmingham's wartime nursery provision which was presented as the exemplar of how such a scheme could work. TNA, MH55/2416, Ministry of Health, Day Nurseries Wartime Policy, Correspondence between Miss A L Puxley, Ministry of Health and Miss M Smieton, Ministry of Labour (April 28, 1941).

³⁶ Cassie, E., 'Child Welfare Work in War-time', *Public Health* (December 1941), pp. 60-65.

From September 1941, once the Ministry of Health accepted responsibility for the approved expenditure on wartime nurseries, the situation eased.³⁷ The financial burden may have been resolved but Birmingham officials faced many more underlying issues. Local authorities still found themselves restricted when trying to provide these facilities, as in reality they were no more than agents of the Ministry of Health. Often the only decisions they made concerned the actual siting of the buildings, the selection of the staff, internal and external decorations and providing small items of play equipment. The Ministry of Health issued all furniture, utensils and soft furnishings from a central store. This was to manage shortages but was extremely frustrating to local authorities such as Birmingham which were accustomed to exercising initiative and discretion.³⁸

The city gained a wartime reputation for getting busy 'on their own' without being asked by the government.³⁹ Wartime nursery organising secretary, Mr A D Edmunds, was appointed at the end of 1941 to be responsible for Civil Defence Area 9 which was based in Birmingham and covered the Midlands.⁴⁰ Edmunds was particularly creative in advancing the development of wartime nurseries in the city. Once central government finally recognised the establishment of wartime nurseries as a top priority, delays in obtaining permits for building materials such as timber, iron and steel still caused problems. Edmunds proposed a number of schemes to

³⁷ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1941.

³⁸ Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), p. 8.

³⁹ TNA, HLG7/82, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Evacuation Region 9, Senior Officers Report, Correspondence to Mr Roundell from H K Nisbet (December 2, 1938).

⁴⁰ Edmunds was secretary to the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health and was seconded to this wartime post. He was responsible for everything but the medical aspects of wartime nurseries. LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (December 17, 1941).

Birmingham's regional Ministry of Health officials and Whitehall which resulted in reducing delays. One scheme reduced the waiting time for permits from what was originally a three-to-four-week wait to just days, while his suggestion to create a local rather than regional storage facility for nursery equipment was beneficial.⁴¹ Another result of Edmunds' initiative was a process whereby builders carried out repairs and alterations quickly.⁴²

Throughout the Second World War, when the Ministry of Labour identified an area which required a nursery, the search for suitable premises or sites began. A variety of establishments accommodated these nurseries but identifying appropriate buildings for conversion was not always easy. The inspection of houses and sites thought appropriate for nursery use took place, but many were found to be unsuitable.⁴³ Wartime nurseries needed to be geographically placed near to the demand to be effective. Officials concerned about the health of young children thought it inappropriate for them to travel long distances to a nursery. Young children might be dropped at the nursery early in the morning and collected in the late evening.⁴⁴ Typically, it took six to nine months from the proposal for a new nursery to be opened.⁴⁵ Shortages of premises to convert to nurseries intensified as war progressed and without the power of compulsion behind them, the negotiations for

⁴¹ The equipment store was based at Handsworth College. Ibid. (June 15, 1943).

⁴² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (January 21, 1942).

⁴³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (December 12, 1941).

⁴⁴ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 9.

⁴⁵ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education Memorandum to Inspectors N.S. No. 210E (May 26, 1944).

land and houses frequently broke down.⁴⁶ Accusations came from the Ministry of Labour that Birmingham officials were setting their standards for day nurseries too high and not progressing quickly enough. Reports were also received of local health officials being obstructive. However, central official Mary Smieton argued that the number of staff working with Dr Cassie was not sufficient to move any faster.⁴⁷ In reality, the standards set by the Ministry of Health for the type of buildings which could be used as nurseries were restrictive and made the task of Birmingham officials difficult. When challenged, Mr Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, agreed that the 'standards required for the accommodation of young children should be relaxed in view of the urgency of the need for nurseries' – before adding he 'should not be ready to approve proposals which would be prejudicial to the health of children whose mothers are at work'.⁴⁸ Most nursery schools, unlike Brearley Street, were adapted buildings and this affected the nature of education within them, but it is difficult to be precise about differing qualities of childcare.

During the hostilities Benslyn's role with the Education Authority changed: he became an adapter by managing conversions, extensions and improvements to various schools and clinics and toured Birmingham with Blatz on his initial visit, highlighting suitable buildings for his project, before converting Garrison Lane School to the Canadian's requirements. He was also responsible for adaptations to

⁴⁶ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1941.

⁴⁷ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Correspondence (September 1941).

⁴⁸ Ibid., Response to House of Commons question from Major Peto M P for Kings Norton, Birmingham (October 23, 1941).

buildings to provide sixty British restaurants, numerous school canteens and kitchens, together with shelter accommodation for over 100,000 children.⁴⁹

Not only were the Birmingham officials trying to satisfy the needs of local people in providing buildings for nursery accommodation but at least two nursery schools from outside the area were evacuated into the city. The 'Margaret McMillan Nursery School' from London was accommodated at Alum Rock Convent from April 10, 1944 – November 21, 1945 and 'St Cleve L.C.C. Nursery School', Kent at 8 Serpentine Road, July 10, 1944 – November 3, 1945.⁵⁰ Most wartime nursery facilities were required in the poor and overcrowded areas of the city where the majority of industry was situated, which resulted in some unusual suggestions. One proposal which gained approval was 135 Bacchus Road where the building was shared by a nursery and a shopkeeper, Harold Boswell, a surprising collaboration.⁵¹ In contrast, another idea presented to Birmingham's Public Health Committee in September 1940 was a plan to convert a portion of the Smallpox Hospital, Witton, into a nursery.⁵² London health officials were concerned about the hospital being used for something other than its present purpose. Similar projects approved by them in other parts of the country had experienced cases of secondary infection. Locally, concern was raised that under war conditions a more severe type of smallpox could be introduced into the country and any delays in restoring the building to its original use might be disastrous to the city and its surrounding areas. Under these circumstances, this

⁴⁹ Surman, J. B., 'Obituary William Thomas Benslyn', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (1948), volume 55, pp. 128-129.

⁵⁰ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

⁵¹ Kelly's Directories Limited, *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham (with its suburbs) and Smethwick* (Birmingham, 1943).

⁵² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1941).

proposal was cancelled.⁵³ However, the local Public Health department did place hutments in the grounds.⁵⁴ Overall, though often hindered by the lack of central guidance, Birmingham officials demonstrated creativity and flexibility in their provision of wartime nursery buildings.

Actual provision

Birmingham officials strove to rise to the challenge of providing wartime nurseries: this section attempts to examine what was provided. By October 1940, the first wartime nurseries were opened in Birmingham using child welfare centres which could be easily adapted.⁵⁵ Only the first six nurseries identified in Table 7.1 were opened by the local Public Health department; the Hawthorns was a voluntary facility provided by the Salvation Army.⁵⁶

Name	Capacity	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance
Birchfield Road	60	18	18	14
The Settlement, Summer Lane	50	12	13	14
Bloomsbury Street	42	15	33	32
Carnegie Institute	32	17	23	23
Monument Road	36	10	10	7
Coventry Road	60	6	11	14
The Hawthorns, Beaufort Road	30	27	25	24

Table 7.1: Details for wartime nursery attendance in Birmingham for three weeks preceding December 13, 1940⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ TNA, ED66/108, Board of Education, Region 9, Birmingham (December, 1941).

⁵⁵ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 17.

⁵⁶ In records, Hawthorns is sometimes written Hawthornes with an 'e'; it is unclear which is correct.

⁵⁷ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 184 note 2.

The take-up of nursery places was slow, as Table 7.1 shows, even though the authorities believed that demand was there. In comparison, nursery schools in the city were full, with waiting lists of double and triple capacity. Until the Ministry of Health took responsibility for the net cost of wartime nurseries in May 1941, there was a cost to mothers of 12s a week, whereas the only payment required at nursery school was 1s 6d per week for each child's dinner. Nursery schooling as part of the national elementary education system was free, but in reality, those families unable to pay the day nursery charge were assessed on a sliding scale, according to their means. There was a financial saving when sending more than one child to day nurseries, provided they were from the same family; two children cost 20s and three children cost 26s. This discrepancy between the two services probably contributed to the slow take-up of places, possibly influencing decisions regarding the actual requirement, but the whole argument of nursery school versus day nurseries was far more complex than merely the financial aspect. Until nursery schools and classes increased their opening hours, the author of one report suggested, these were far too short to be of use to mothers on war-work.⁵⁸ Three nursery school matrons, who experienced the difficulties faced by mothers directly, suggested that changing the opening hours would be helpful.⁵⁹ Eventually, the nursery schools' or classes' hours were extended, although uniformity was not applied, and schools were opened anytime between 8 am and 7 pm. Three nurseries also opened on a Saturday morning. Birmingham LEA not only extended their

⁵⁸ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 17.

⁵⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 20, 1941).

opening hours but also approved two-year-olds attending pre-school facilities, provided that the staff and building could accommodate them.⁶⁰ Concern was raised regarding whether the Elementary Education sub-committee should deviate from its principles regarding nursery education. It was, however, noted that under 'emergency conditions' the question of committee principles did not arise, which in effect released the sub-committee from previous decisions during the hostilities.⁶¹

Not all hospitals were considered unsuitable venues for nurseries. Even though staff at Birmingham's voluntary hospitals did not approve the establishment of day nurseries as permanent institutions, most of them recognised them as 'disagreeable war-time necessities to deal with a difficult situation'.⁶² These voluntary hospitals held a certain amount of unused accommodation in reserve for possible large increases in casualties or in case of bomb damage to other parts of their buildings. Their use as nurseries did not require much adaptation. Representatives of these organisations agreed to place suitable premises at the disposal of the Ministry of Health and the city for use as day nurseries, provided that the efficiency of the emergency medical service was not affected. As part of the scheme, four large wards and a portion of the infants' block were provided at the Children's Hospital; and two wards were supplied at the Jaffray Hospital, Erdington. The recovery home of the Women's Hospital, Sparkbrook, was made available along with a branch of the

⁶⁰ Ibid. (December 18, 1941).

⁶¹ Ibid.

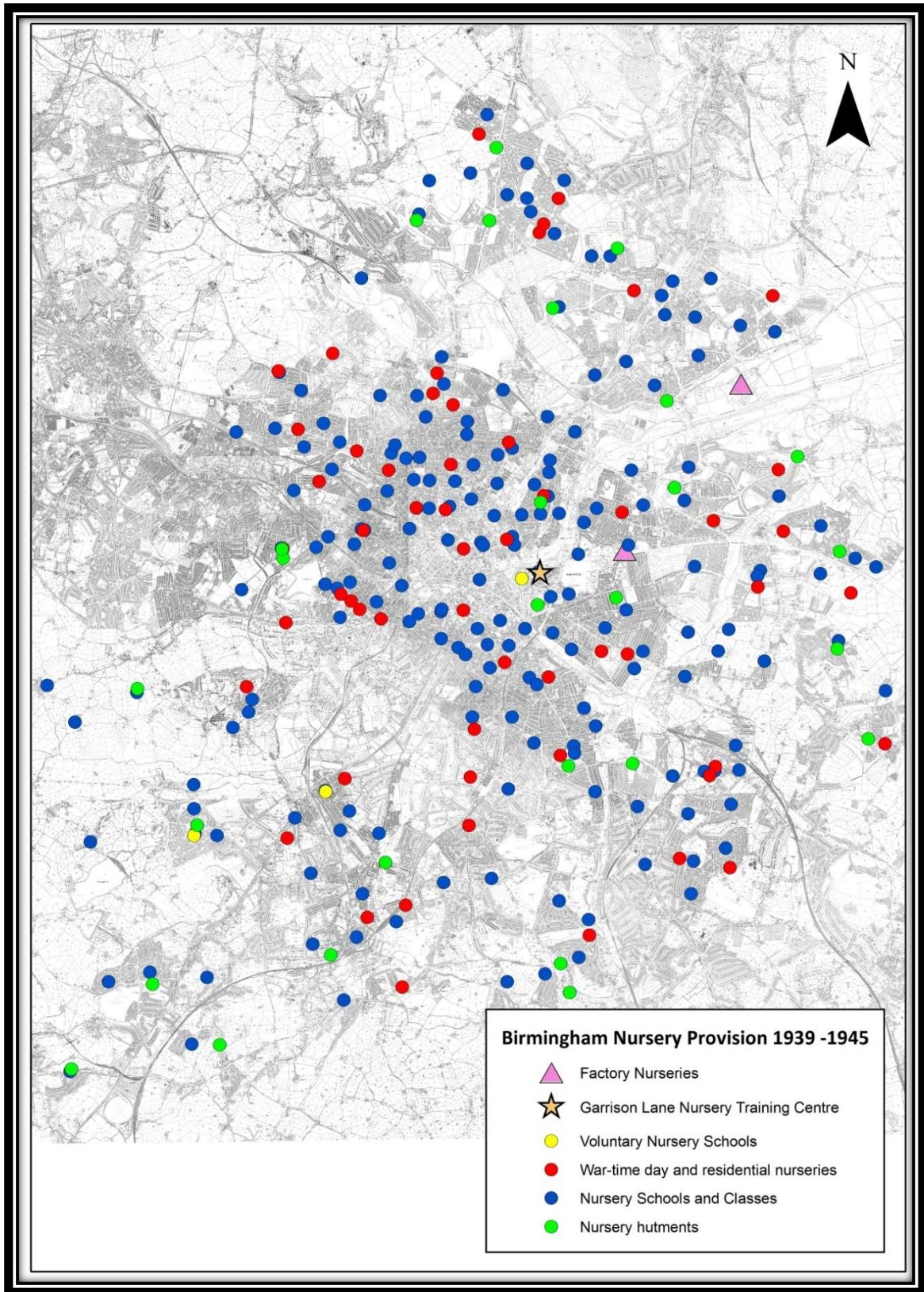
⁶² *Birmingham Mail*, 'Day Nurseries' (December 12, 1941), p. 5.

Ear and Throat Hospital in Edgbaston, and part of Moseley Hall Convalescent Home. These facilities provided places for several hundred children.⁶³

Data have been extrapolated from a number of sources to determine where wartime nurseries, nursery schools or classes were sited, their opening date and the building or conversion costs where available (appendix 7). Even though committee minutes hold a wealth of information there are imperfections in the evidence because of changing events and the fluidity of record keeping during the war. For example, sites predicted for wartime nurseries were constantly changing due to bomb damage or buildings being commandeered for alternative 'important' use. Data were sometimes conflicting, particularly the naming of a nursery: for example, Flint Green House would sometimes be referred to as Sherbourne Road Nursery. Unexploded bombs temporarily closed nurseries which resulted in children being moved elsewhere.⁶⁴ However, by transferring the extrapolated data into a Geographic Information System (GIS), it has been possible to create a series of maps displaying the different types of facilities available before merging (Map 7.1) to reveal the rapid expansion of wartime nurseries available in the city by the end of 1944.

⁶³ Ibid..

⁶⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (January 15, 1941).



Map 7.1: Wartime nursery provision available in Birmingham 1939-1945

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Birmingham's wartime nursery provision consisted of five LEA-provided and three voluntary establishments, providing places for approximately 460 children. By mid-1944 central government officials were beginning to discourage further plans from being submitted. By then, however, Birmingham officials had increased their facilities to eighty-two wartime nurseries, including twenty-nine temporary hutments. Nine of the wartime nurseries also offered twenty-four-hour facilities which were managed by the local Public Health department. In addition, 190 nursery schools or classes were provided by Birmingham LEA which arranged provision for children under five to attend classes generally held in primary schools and opening hours were extended to accommodate the needs of working mothers. These buildings were easily adaptable for the pre-school child, so their facilities were in place by April 23, 1942, well before any significant growth in wartime nurseries provided by Public Health.

The three voluntary establishments played their part by increasing the number of nursery places offered. Two factory nurseries are known to have been established. All of these establishments existed at some time between 1939 and 1945 even though they did not always survive for the whole period due to the fluidity of the hostilities. Under wartime conditions city officials managed to achieve something they had previously been unable to replicate in peacetime conditions: to increase pre-school education. Because the demand for premises suitable for conversion into nurseries in Birmingham was never likely to be sufficient, temporary hutments represented one way to fill the gap.

Temporary hutments

Prefabricated hutments provided an additional element of nursery accommodation: this section explores how appropriate and effective they were for childcare. Nursery provision in wartime necessitated the quick erection of simple and inexpensive buildings. By March 1941 it was obvious that temporary prefabricated buildings were required to supplement the scheme due to the lack of appropriate accommodation for conversion into nurseries. If suitable premises were not available, a site was chosen to erect prefabricated hutments supplied by the Ministry of Works and Buildings to help alleviate the issue. Temporary buildings were not always a flawless answer to the nursery accommodation problem. Early models were quick to erect but did not stand up to bad weather very well: one unidentified Midland hut was carried away on a night of high wind.⁶⁵ The hutments were supplied with timber or concrete floors; however, Dr Brodie of Birmingham Public Health Department was offered concrete floors when she had been promised timber for the first delivery. Even if covered, concrete floors in her opinion were unsuitable for small children to crawl and sit on and were definitely injurious. Convinced that timber floors were better for the children's health, she held out for those.⁶⁶ Birmingham was one of the first cities to use prefabricated huts for nurseries and some of the first models used were the 'Nashcrete' or 'Maycrete' type, the second being the local preferred option.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 8.

⁶⁶ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries (April and May, 1941).

⁶⁷ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, pp. 8-9. Both hutments were a combination of concrete and timber. As far as materials were concerned they were similar; however, the structural arrangements of the walls differed. Maycrete wall units spanned horizontally between posts whereas Nashcrete wall units were vertical. An acknowledged design fault on the Maycrete huts was the boltheads which were exposed to the elements and prone to corrosion. Author unidentified, *The Architects' Journal* (August 13, 1942),

Originally, there were difficulties transporting and storing the huts, which resulted in breakages to the prefabricated parts, causing further delays.⁶⁸ Some Maycrete blocks in particular at Goodway Road were described as being in a 'deplorable condition' only ten months after the building was completed and required urgent attention in order to get through another winter.⁶⁹ Even though these prefabricated buildings posed quality issues, a small number still exist in Birmingham in use as nursery schools, one of these being at West Heath (Figure 7.5).



Figure 7.5: Surviving wartime hutment, West Heath Nursery School⁷⁰

Temporary hutments offered a flexible design which could be changed according to the shape of land available (see appendix 8). One of the first hutments to open was on the corner of Kingstanding Circle and Dunedin Road in February 1942, while West

volume 96, issue 2481, 'Prefabricated Huts', pp. 107-110 [Online], <http://www.proquest.org> (Accessed: October 20, 2017).

⁶⁸ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', part 2, p. 9.

⁶⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (September 15, 1943).

⁷⁰ Author's photograph.

Heath Nursery was opened September 14, 1942.⁷¹ When compared with the original plans, the structure of the building has not changed. In 2014, the head teacher at this nursery felt that the design of the building had stood the test of time and was still fit for purpose.⁷² However, in 1942 Lady Allen of Hurtwood, President of the Nursery School Association, criticised the government huts used as nurseries, arguing that the window space was inadequate, there were unnecessary passages and the fixtures were adapted for grown-ups rather than for the perceived needs of children.⁷³ Lady Reading did not agree; she was 'quite delighted with the results', considering they had turned out exactly as intended, providing 'minimum requirements for a decent nursery under War-time conditions'.⁷⁴ Each hutment was able to accommodate sixty children. In Birmingham, some hutments were placed in the proximity of established child welfare clinics in order to reduce running costs by sharing facilities such as day-light air-raid shelters.⁷⁵ In 1942 permission was granted for the erection of wartime children's day nurseries in local parks and recreation grounds.⁷⁶ There was little time difference between the erection of a hutment or converting a building for nursery use. Hutments could not be delivered and built in less than three months whereas to convert a large residential home into a nursery took more than two months. A number of firms were contracted to erect

⁷¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, Wartime Nursery Progress Report (September 16, 1942).

⁷² *Wood Interviews*, Sue Worgan, Head teacher of West Heath Nursery School (June 24, 2014).

⁷³ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'War-time Nurseries' (July 23, 1942), p. 621.

⁷⁴ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence from Lady Reading to Miss Puxley (August 19, 1942).

⁷⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

⁷⁶ Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), p. 83.

prefabricated hutments in Birmingham.⁷⁷ Locating suitable land to erect temporary hutments in the already overpopulated areas where they were required was not easy. Administrative delays could be caused while the welfare authority awaited formal approval to place a contract. If one committee meeting had been missed it could be weeks until the next.⁷⁸ Even when all of these challenges were met, it was not uncommon for nursery equipment to arrive in twenty or thirty different consignments, resulting in more delays, by which time nursery staff could have been appointed and receiving pay while waiting for their workplace to open. Wartime nurseries created even more needs, for example, dealing with laundry, air raid precautions, coal, hot water supplies, medical supervision, teaching of toddlers and outdoor play facilities, but Cassie, Birmingham Senior Assistant Medical Officer of Health, considered: 'The only reward lies in the fact that the mothers have confidence in the nurseries, while the children themselves do well.'⁷⁹ Two major issues related to opening a large number of nurseries were finding adequately trained staff (as discussed in Chapter 8) and the ability to feed everyone.⁸⁰ With the exception of eight nurseries which cooked for themselves, three central kitchens at Bacchus Road, Oak Tree Lane and Yardley Green catered for the remainder.⁸¹ To appreciate the scale of the operation, Table 7.2 displays one week's provision of meals and beverages from these kitchens.

⁷⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1942).

⁷⁸ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9 (February 2, 1942).

⁷⁹ Cassie, E., 'Child Welfare Work in War-time', *Public Health* (December 1941), pp. 60-65.

⁸⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (June 2, 1942).

⁸¹ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

	Bacchus Road (supplied 21 nurseries & dinner for Monument Road Child Welfare Centre)	Oak Tree Lane (supplied 24 nurseries)	Yardley Green (supplied 21 nurseries)	Totals
Children				
Breakfasts	2,138	2,059	2,763	6,960
Dinner	4,240	5,204	4,967	14,411
Tea	4,201	4,689	4,359	13,249
Hot beverages	9,627	10,505	10,213	30,345
Adults				
Breakfasts	820	832	767	2,419
Dinner	1,484	1,730	1,581	4,795
Tea	689	720	701	2,110
Hot beverages	6,057	6,834	6,197	19,088

Table 7.2: Meals provided to wartime nurseries in Birmingham from three central kitchens⁸²

The food was distributed to the various nurseries by van.⁸³ These kitchen arrangements added extra pressure on the already depleted supply of wartime staff, transport and fuel and negotiating delivery routes following air raids was probably difficult. One private arrangement was made when the opening of two nursery classes was delayed due to their inability to provide food. Edith Cadbury Nursery, a voluntary establishment, was approached to supply meals from its kitchens to nearby Princethorpe Road Primary School, Weoley Castle.⁸⁴

⁸² Data for the chart were taken from the Medical Officers Report. Ibid., 1945.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/34, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1942), April 23, 1942.

Though their options were limited, Birmingham officials were reluctant to compromise on standards even for temporary arrangements such as the nursery hutments. The research in this thesis reveals that a harmonious alliance between the local official and the voluntary nursery school movement existed as displayed by the private arrangement for the provision of meals to reduce delays in opening nursery classes.

Within the nursery

This section engages with the material culture of schooling and investigates why and how objects came into the nursery, and the meanings that surrounded their use.

Objects can be problematic. Equipment can appear, according to Burke and Grosvenor, 'to reflect pervasive notions of pedagogy, but also to promote ideas and theories about the relationship between pupil and teacher and between body and mind in learning'.⁸⁵

For pre-literate children the equipment within the nursery was just as integral to the learning process as the buildings and gardens. Since the nursery school movement was still in its early development at the beginning of the 1930s, the type of equipment recommended for use in these establishments was still evolving by wartime. Few ready-made articles had the essential qualities which made them suitable for nursery school use, mainly due to the lack of understanding by manufacturers.⁸⁶

By the Second World War Birmingham Education Authority had established a reputation for its work with this age group. Dr Innes, Birmingham Chief

⁸⁵ Burke, C., and Grosvenor, I., *School* (London, 2008), p. 10.

⁸⁶ Heinig, C. M., 'Nursery School Equipment', *Childhood Education* (January 1, 1929), volume 5, pp. 302-306.

Education Officer, was invited to provide a display of equipment appropriate for use by five-year-olds in a nursery for a London conference on 'Design in Education' in January 1937. Jointly organised by the Council for Art and Industry and London County Council, the exhibition was held at the Conference Hall in County Hall, London.⁸⁷ Gropius created a display for the exhibition which focused on mathematical instruction at an elementary level; however, evidence to date does not indicate whether or not he made any contribution to Birmingham's nursery exhibit.⁸⁸ Birmingham's final design (see Figure 7.6) shows that before the war local officials wanted to provide the best facilities possible for pre-school children. The equipment used in the display is itemised in appendix 9.

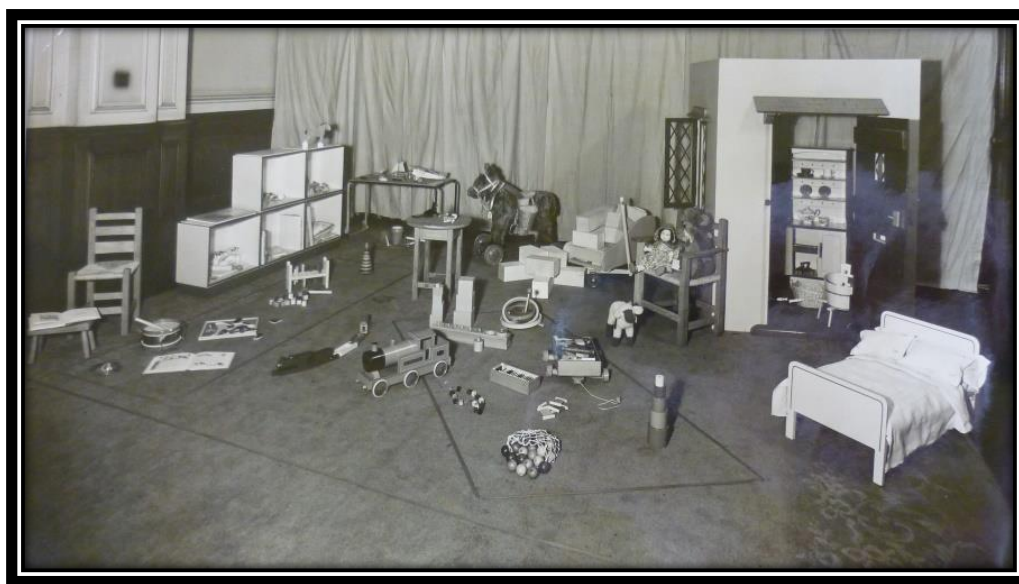


Figure 7.6: Nursery School display created by Birmingham Education Authority for the 'Design in Education' Conference, London, 1937⁸⁹

⁸⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1, Box 30, File 10, Exhibition of Materials for use in Elementary Schools. Approximately 11,000 people attended with a high proportion of these being elementary school teachers. Armitage, M., 'The Influence of School Architecture and Design on the Outdoor Play Experience within the Primary School', *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* volume 41, issue 4-5, pp. 535-553.

⁸⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1, Box 30, File 10, Exhibition of Materials for use in Elementary Schools. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

In the exhibition's supporting text (appendix 9), Innes described how the items displayed were chosen not only to introduce school activities but also to make an impression on the child aesthetically. Equipment should be of educational value, of sound material and workmanship while being beautiful in form and colour. He refers to the buildings having fresh air and sunshine with space for free childhood activities in a happy atmosphere of beauty and joy with the abundance of play material provided which were qualities Benslyn promoted in his Brearley Street Nursery design.⁹⁰ There is every possibility that this exhibit influenced the type of equipment used in Birmingham wartime nurseries. Miss Loveday, a local inspector attached to the Board of Education, was involved in the creation of this display and she tried to obtain a copy of Figure 7.6 when involved with local wartime nursery development.⁹¹ As Canadian team member Dorothy Millichamp revealed (Chapter 6), many Birmingham children attending Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre during the Second World War had to be introduced to play as they did not know how to use typical nursery materials. To the children, the nursery was a strange and alien place. They were not used to what was inside. The space was therefore 'controlled' and 'managed' by the teachers.

The variety of buildings adapted for nurseries meant there was never likely to be uniformity in their external or internal design and in the nature of their education. Forty-five wide-ranging properties or sites were taken under compulsory possession for adaptation, and the nature of internal space was

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

dictated by what was available, which in this instance included external play spaces.⁹² Modern architect Mark Dudek suggests that while '[i]t cannot be conclusively proven that all children depend or indeed need good architectural space to thrive and learn during the early years', there is 'a growing body of evidence to suggest that a child's perception of space is critical, particularly where children come from deprived or abusive homes'.⁹³ Benslyn's elaborate curved staircase (Figure 7.7) may have been an example of what he meant about the perception of space.

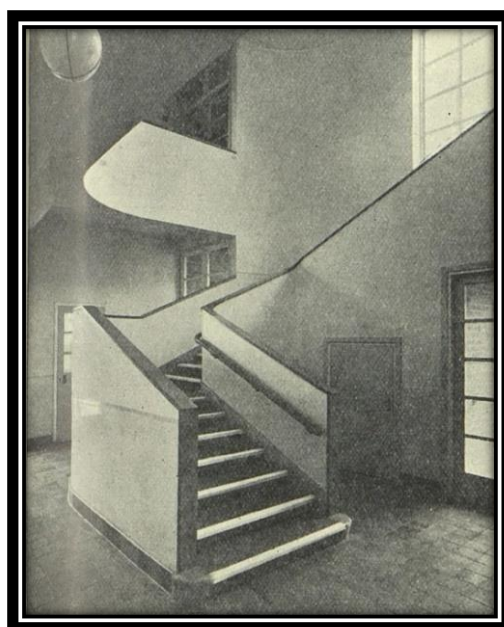


Figure 7.7: Internal staircase at Brearley Street Nursery School⁹⁴

Brearley Street Nursery School stood out like a beacon externally, internally features such as this staircase made a statement but what was the point of Benslyn's elaborate design? A staircase for example can be a symbol of power or status,

⁹² Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), p. 49.

⁹³ Dudek, M., *Schools and Kindergartens: A Design Manual* (Basel, 2015), p. 12.

⁹⁴ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

spiritual elevation and the climb to knowledge. What appears to be a functional fixture is a place of motion and encounter, and therefore of politics. An internal staircase has different politics to that of an external staircase; an enclosed stair is different than an open stair.⁹⁵ Janet Sullivan, a nursery nurse at Brearley Street nursery during the 1960s reported how during her employment the children always used the external staircase rather than this one. It appeared to be saved to provide a grand entrance for events such as the annual visit of Father Christmas.⁹⁶ In reality the children could access both first floor classrooms directly from the playground which probably made their entrance much easier for themselves and staff. This implies that the elaborate internal staircase was intended to impress visitors rather than aid the pupils: this element was largely irrelevant for the nature of the interaction between the children and their teachers, but was nonetheless, an important statement. Children in the area lived in dark poor-quality housing but this nursery offered something completely different. Benslyn was not only displaying his architectural skills he was opening up the entrance hall to light with an abundance of daylight and indoor space which was probably very different to the domestic experiences of these children. If Birmingham Council was being innovative in its buildings, it was likely to do the same with its curriculum. The aim was to have the latest, the best even if not the cheapest, but what was important was how the schools were intending to add value to the children's lives.

Blatz found that the children attending Garrison Lane Nursery lived in cramped unhealthy surroundings, but the Canadians quickly noticed an improvement in

⁹⁵ 'Notes on staircases' [Online], <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/housing/333722/notes-on-staircases/> (Accessed: January 16, 2022).

⁹⁶ *Wood Interviews*, Dr Janet Sullivan (February 15, 2017).

their cleanliness and health. It would, however, be speculative to attribute those improvements to the internal or external design of the nursery. Figures 7.8 and 7.9 provide an opportunity to compare the difference in natural daylight and indoor space with the benefit of appropriate design. Garrison Lane, a converted Board School, and Brearley Street, the first purpose-built nursery, were both sited amongst crowded residential and industrial buildings. However, Benslyn succeeded in securing additional light and space in his modern purpose-built design.

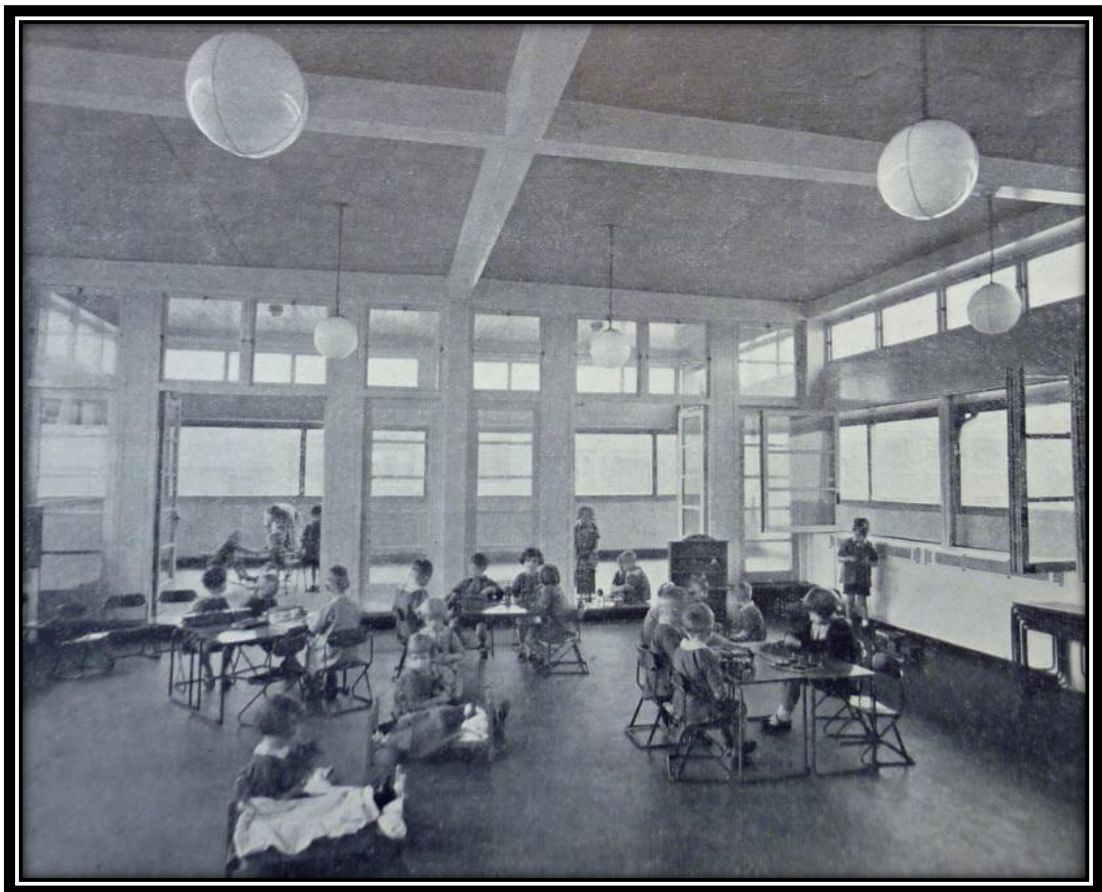


Figure 7.8: Brearley Street Nursery School ⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).



Figure 7.9: Garrison Lane Nursery⁹⁸

Overtly or covertly, equipment used within an educational building can be used as a form of control, for example a chair can be designed to control posture.⁹⁹ Similarly staff sitting on a seat in a higher position than that of the children conveys greater authority. However, Figure 7.9 shows the opposite as the Canadian women sat on little chairs. The women were in charge but there is a different type of relationship emerging here. They are engaging with the children rather than dominating them as they would if sitting on an adult chair.

During the Second World War the shortage of suitable equipment for nursery schools was as acute as the lack of appropriate buildings in which to place them. Predictions of expenditure had been based on the previous experience of voluntary bodies which, unfortunately, had failed to recognise the value of generous gifts which were

⁹⁸ Wood Private Collection.

⁹⁹ Burke, C., and Grosvenor, I., *School* (London, 2008), p.10.

no longer available.¹⁰⁰ Once this shortfall was recognised, funding was increased and standards improved, but teaching equipment was essential and expensive.¹⁰¹ When the Canadian Team's equipment failed to arrive in Birmingham, Blatz described how they adapted items from the Garrison Lane 'junk heap' for use in the nursery and student training rooms. With the co-operation of the local authorities, they 'shopped, begged and cadged' equipment. As a last resort Blatz obtained an order enabling them to 'glean' items from the depleted stock held by the Midland Educational Supply Co. The morning before Garrison Lane was due to open, he described how 'Margaret, Anne and I shopped from cellar to attic, from counter and walls, in two hours, leaving behind us one saleslady [sic] with bronchitis in neurotic despair and one sales manager in utter bewilderment'.¹⁰² Blatz's determination and status enabled him to cross boundaries created by official processes more quickly and easily than others.

Shortages meant that nursery furniture and equipment in each establishment was not standard. In September 1940, one Birmingham wartime nursery was reported as having appropriate child-sized furniture.¹⁰³ Conversely, in October 1941, another nursery was described as being 'bare of proper equipment' with the children 'sitting on grown-up chairs and eating from grown-up tables'.¹⁰⁴ One nursery required few finishing touches before admitting its first intake of children, but had items stolen by

¹⁰⁰ Cassie, E., 'Child Welfare Work in War-time', *Public Health* (December 1941), pp. 60-65.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernhardt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰³ *Birmingham Post*, 'Day Nursery' (September 27, 1940), p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Too Few Nurseries' (October 9, 1941), p. 3.

the workmen building shelters on the site, which delayed the opening further.¹⁰⁵

Memoranda from the Board of Education to Nursery School Inspectors describe how educational and play equipment was made from scrap material, including furniture and timber taken from bombed buildings as there was insufficient new timber in the country to justify making large toys such as climbing frames. Guidance from the Board of Education allowed smaller toys to be purchased commercially if it was not possible to obtain satisfactory equipment in any other way.¹⁰⁶ This was, of course, assuming the items were actually available. A survey by school inspectors of early Birmingham wartime nurseries managed by the Maternity and Child Welfare Authority indicated that the shortage of play material was serious. They argued that more should be done by staff to encourage children to do things themselves, contending that the stories read to the children should be re-considered and the pictures chosen with more discrimination. Additionally, emphasis should be paid to resourcefulness using items such as 'water and earth' which cost nothing. Physical care was not faulted other than that the food was 'generally too sloppy'.¹⁰⁷ The inadequacies in the nurseries were apparent.

From the opening of Birmingham's first wartime nurseries, public appeals appeared in local newspapers for donations of equipment and toys, ranging from large items such as prams and playpens, to smaller ones.¹⁰⁸ Baby equipment was scarce, particularly prams, and waiting lists were created for those who needed them. One

¹⁰⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (April 27, 1942).

¹⁰⁶ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Memorandum to Inspectors N.S. No. 58(E) (February 18, 1942).

¹⁰⁷ TNA, ED66/108, Board of Education, Region 9, Birmingham (December, 1941).

¹⁰⁸ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Day Nurseries' (July 26, 1940), p. 1; *Birmingham Mail*, 'Day Nurseries' (December 12, 1941), p. 5.

Birmingham woman remembered that her baby was six months old before her turn for a pram arrived.¹⁰⁹ The appeals came from official sources as well as from the voluntary sector which sometimes collaborated with local businesses. Mrs Dorothy Lloyd, Chairman of the Birmingham Day Nurseries Voluntary Workers Committee, appealed for donations of toys in a local newspaper requesting delivery to Messrs. C. Kunzle, Ltd., Broad Street, as the collecting depot for the appeal.¹¹⁰ Donors of equipment and toys were as varied as those requesting them. Twelve months after the King and Queen visited Birchfield Road Nursery, the establishment received toys made by local manufacturer Chad Valley. The company had approached Queen Elizabeth, requesting her nomination of an institution to receive this gift.¹¹¹

Birmingham's Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) organised a toy-making scheme under which interested clubs registered with them and were provided with available materials to make play equipment. Approximately fifty groups registered with this scheme, including schoolboys (Aldridge Boys School), members of the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Service, men recovering in Northfield Military Hospital, and factory workers. Toys made under the auspices of this scheme helped to supply local wartime nurseries, as well as providing presents for other children at special times such as Christmas. The toy-making committee originally concentrated on the quantity rather than the quality of toys supplied but, realising that this was a false economy, later turned its attention to producing better items. The WVS was unable

¹⁰⁹ Longmate, N., *How we Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War* (London, 1977), p. 177.

¹¹⁰ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Day Nurseries' (December 12, 1941), p. 5. C. Kunzle Ltd was started in the early 1920s by Christian Kunzle, a Swiss chef, who worked for a time at the House of Commons, Westminster. He opened a number of restaurants in and around Birmingham and a factory was established at Garrett's Green to supply cakes and pastries to these. J Lyons and Co, Kunzle Cakes Ltd [Online], <http://www.kzwp.com/lyons1/kunzle> (Accessed: August 18, 2016).

¹¹¹ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Queen Remembers' (January 9, 1943), p. 1.

to meet the demand. Some wardens of wartime nurseries with experience of toy-making were supplied by the WVS with materials to make their own toys. Members of the Canadian Children's Service based at Garrison Lane offered advice and ideas to the WVS on equipment to be made by these groups. Many difficulties had to be overcome by the WVS for the toy-making scheme to be successful. The exercise was reliant on obtaining a variety of materials which were in short supply. Local industry was sometimes able to donate wood, enabling outdoor equipment such as a climbing frame to be made. A competitive element entered into the scheme with some local toy-making groups taking part in the Regional Toy Competition held in Stoke-on-Trent. Interesting and original toys were submitted, and one Birmingham WVS Housewives' Group was awarded first prize for a complete Noah's Ark. Other similar groups were recorded as creating 'picture books out of scraps, blackout material, and coloured wallpapers'.¹¹² Well over two thousand toys are known to have been made by these groups for local wartime nurseries, which indicated how the provision of curriculum materials for the schools became a community and not just a local governmental effort.¹¹³ It is more difficult to show how the equipment and toys were used.

Local people and nurseries

Those people connected with nursery provision had different aims, experiences and perspectives, which offered the potential for collision. This chapter begins by looking at the physical creation of nurseries as buildings and spaces and the kind of objects

¹¹² WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018).

¹¹³ Ibid.

within them. It might be assumed that the availability of wartime nurseries was appreciated by local people; however, there was some wartime negativity which remained hidden from view. Through the interplay of the different characters or organisations, the remainder of this chapter explores the impact these nurseries had locally, in order to understand how they operated as real-world places as opposed to works of architectural design. Birmingham's wartime nursery provision created an arena for conflict and resolution. The backdrop to everything was formed by the hostilities which both created and aggravated the situation. The goal of many was to transform the nursery experience for the local children and Birmingham Council through its various departments embraced opportunities for experimentation in an effort to improve the lives of its population while still fulfilling the needs of industry. Blatz and his team arrived to put forward their own ideas for better childrearing to the Birmingham working classes. Parents were the users of this service and wartime nurseries would remain empty if they failed to provide working mothers with appropriate care for their children. Contrary to wartime myths, not everyone worked together with the same agenda and nurseries even became an opportunity for the theft of goods.

Birmingham LEA wanted to provide a clean and stimulating environment for young children. Even though these childcare establishments were unable to offer perfection, they were still likely to provide better facilities than could be offered in many homes in terms of clothing, air, light and cleanliness. As the Canadian Team realised upon its arrival, the families they planned to serve came from cramped,

unhealthy surroundings.¹¹⁴ Team member Anne Harris described in correspondence how the children arrived at the nursery in a grubby state.¹¹⁵ Dorothy Millichamp, another team member, recalled how the children were not academically and intellectually ready for school; neither did they know how to eat off a plate and they had to be introduced to play.¹¹⁶ This experience presented by the Canadians is not a true reflection of the visual imagery illustrated in Figures 7.10 and 7.11. Produced by the Ministry of Information, these images form part of an official collection, probably intended to show mothers that nurseries were a safe and pleasant environment in which to leave their children while they themselves carried out war-work.



Figure 7.10 and Figure 7.11: Flint Green Road Nursery¹¹⁷

These particular images depict smart clean children and mothers arriving at the nursery which boasts large well-maintained gardens as play areas. The buildings

¹¹⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, *The Star Weekly*, 'Canadians tackle the slums' (November 7, 1942).

¹¹⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 2, Letter from Anne Harris to Gery Blatz (September 23, 1942); TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

¹¹⁶ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

¹¹⁷ IWM, D 9067 and D 9052, *Ministry of Information Second World War Collection*, 'Nursery for working mothers: The work of Flint Green Road Nursery, Birmingham', 1942 [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: August 31, 2017), © IWM D 9067 and D 9052.

converted to nurseries in the inner city often did not have the luxury of such well-maintained grounds.

Some of the mothers wishing to enter the workplace could not afford to clothe their children for nursery life. A number of 'tweenies' (nine months to two years old) were carried to nurseries by their mothers in old worn-out clothing covered with a shawl or blanket as they did not have warm outdoor wear.¹¹⁸ This made it impossible for them to play outside during the winter. However, once their predicament was highlighted, local officials tried to help. Their experience was different from that of the child displayed in the propaganda image (Figure 7.12), also taken locally, where the child is arriving dressed in a smart winter hat and coat.



Figure 7.12: Flint Green Road Nursery, Birmingham ¹¹⁹

Attempts by local officials to obtain suitable clothing for these 'necessitous nursery children' were unsuccessful, although they obtained a roll of warm material from the

¹¹⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (May 19, 1943).

¹¹⁹ IWM, D 9051, *Ministry of Information Second World War Collection*, 'Nursery for working mothers: The work of Flint Green Road Nursery, Birmingham', 1942 [Online], <http://www.iwm.org> (Accessed: August 31, 2017), © IWM D 9051.

Board of Trade and arrangements were made for the WVS to make 'pixie suits'.¹²⁰

This local scheme in some of the poorer districts offered mothers with children attending nurseries an opportunity to purchase these suits at a fixed price plus the appropriate number of clothing coupons.¹²¹ By the following month, over 100 mothers across twelve nurseries had expressed interest in purchasing the suits.¹²²

The WVS also received a number of requests from the matrons of wartime nurseries to knit garments for the children.¹²³ The Canadian Team had experienced a similar situation twelve months earlier but their high-profile connections enabled them to obtain donations of clothing.

In Birmingham, even though the number of wartime nurseries had increased by February 1944, there were still insufficient places in the 'popular' ones. In this instance, the author believes that the term 'popular' was used to describe those close to a large number of factories. Because not all nurseries catered for the whole age range of pre-school children, planning to fill existing vacancies or meet actual demand became more complicated. For example, nursery vacancies might only exist for under-twos in an area where mothers wanted to place older children. To alleviate this blockage and reduce waiting lists, a scheme was devised to transport children from those areas to establishments with vacancies. Ambulances were provided by the Civil Defence Committee to help overcome transportation difficulties.¹²⁴ The

¹²⁰ Pixie suits were heavyweight over-suits for toddlers.

¹²¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (May 19, 1943).

¹²² Ibid. (June 16, 1943).

¹²³ WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018).

¹²⁴ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1944.

scale of this scheme is not clear, but fifty-eight children are known to have been transported in this way during February 1944.¹²⁵ This was not an ideal solution as it made the children and their escorts susceptible to additional dangers. Ambulances transporting children to other nurseries were sometimes involved in accidents. On one occasion at least eighteen children sustained slight cuts, contusions or abrasions and shock. The nurses in attendance suffered shock and bruising and were sent home, and the shocked driver suffered facial injuries.¹²⁶

Wartime nurseries not only offered a service to working mothers and their young children but also provided opportunities for criminals. The crimes committed ranged from pilfering and vandalism to organised theft, which impacted on the limited availability of equipment and supplies. After his appointment at the end of 1941, most of the monthly reports presented by Mr Edmunds, local wartime nursery organising secretary to the Maternity and Child Welfare sub-committee, detailed crimes committed at one or other of their establishments.¹²⁷

All pilferers, if caught, were disciplined, whether the culprits were nursery staff or not. One matron was given the 'opportunity of resigning' after purloining a 2lb jar of apricot jam.¹²⁸ Older children entertained themselves by breaking into nurseries, not always stealing items but causing damage and disruption.¹²⁹ The items stolen included cash, playpens, cots, linen and blankets, and one man confidently entered a

¹²⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (February 16, 1944).

¹²⁶ Ibid. (June 21 and September 12, 1944).

¹²⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, Wartime Nursery progress reports (July 15, 1942; February 17 and July 21, 1943).

¹²⁸ Ibid. (October 13, 1944).

¹²⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 15, 1942).

nursery during opening hours to steal the matron's handbag.¹³⁰ On at least one occasion those employed to protect the locality became the offenders. Three of Birmingham's Police Force were found guilty in 1943 of stealing a clothes wringer, electric irons and other items from more than one nursery in the Kingstanding area. Each was sentenced to nine months hard labour.¹³¹ Rather than decreasing towards the end of the hostilities, crime in the nurseries actually escalated.¹³² Birmingham officials saw wartime nurseries as an opportunity to improve the lives of children and their families, which was appreciated by many local people.

Health in the nursery

As war progressed and nursery provision increased, the medical profession observed the effect that this communal life had upon children's lives. Birmingham's large numbers of wartime nurseries were ideal for carrying out detailed health studies, but the key issue is whether the health of the children improved. Concern for the health of young children was usually one of the reasons cited for not increasing nurseries, particularly for children under two because of the spread of childhood epidemic diseases and the possible decline in mothers breast-feeding their babies in order to carry out war-work. Increased breast-feeding had been an important contributory factor in leading to the falling neonatal mortality rate. Doctors who had often found it difficult to persuade mothers to breast-feed their infants feared that if the artificial feeding of infants from one month old was to be endorsed by the Ministry of Health, it would be almost impossible to convince mothers of the importance of breast-feeding

¹³⁰ Ibid. (June 28, July 23 and December 15, 1943; April 19, 1944).

¹³¹ Ibid. (July 21, 1943).

¹³² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, Wartime Nursery progress reports (January 17, and October 4, 1945).

at the end of the hostilities.¹³³ Medical professionals debated these concerns through correspondence to the Ministry of Health or in medical journals such as *The Lancet*. Birmingham paediatrician Leonard G Parsons believed that wartime nurseries for children aged two and over were commendable but that the plan to admit infants from one month old was 'open to severe criticism'.¹³⁴ The risk of childhood infections and the effect on breast-feeding and its future promotion were cited by Parsons in correspondence to Sir Arthur MacNalty, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health.¹³⁵ His concerns were obviously not alleviated as a month later Parsons voiced them again but this time in *The Lancet*. He questioned 'whether the dearth of skilled munitions workers in any area is so great as to make the employment of mothers of infants under-nine months of age essential'.¹³⁶ Normally, the Ministry of Health would have agreed that the place for young children was with their mother, at least until the end of the breast-feeding period.¹³⁷ In reality, if mothers were determined to work, little would prevent them. One Birmingham mother proudly admitted to a newspaper how she left the younger of her two children attending nursery at just three weeks old.¹³⁸ Parsons' correspondence in *The Lancet* provoked responses from Dr Mary Barrow of the Birmingham Day Nursery Campaign

¹³³ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 193-194.

¹³⁴ Parsons, L. G., 'Infants in Day Nurseries', *The Lancet* (October 12, 1940), p. 467.

¹³⁵ TNA, MH55/695, Ministry of Health, Correspondence from Leonard G Parsons to Sir Arthur MacNalty (September 2, 1940). 'Born and educated in the Midlands, Sir Leonard Parsons made major contributions to the field of paediatrics in that area and played a leading role in the regional organisation of this specialty throughout the United Kingdom in the later years of his life.' 'Throughout the 1930s he improved the clinical facilities and teaching at the Birmingham Children's Hospital as well as building up research there. The advent of the second world war in 1939 found him carrying multiple responsibilities as Dean of the Medical Faculty, as a member of the GMC, as Councillor of the RCP, and a medical officer for the Ministry of Health for the Midland Region.' 'On his retirement in 1946, he was knighted for services to children during the war'. Dunn, P. M., 'Perinatal Lessons from the Past: Sir Leonard Parsons of Birmingham (1879-1950) and Antenatal Paediatrics', *Arch Dis Child Fetal Neonatal Ed* volume 86, pp. 65-67.

¹³⁶ Parsons, L. G., 'Infants in Day Nurseries', *The Lancet* (October 12, 1940), p. 467.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Evening Despatch*, 'Mother of Eight on War Work' (November 7, 1942), p. 4.

Committee and Dr Dorothy Brenner, a local GP. Both acknowledged the validity of the points raised but suggested that under present conditions day nurseries were as essential to the welfare of children as any other public service. Barrow proposed that the lack of sick benefit meant nursing mothers had little alternative but to leave their baby at an early age to return to work.¹³⁹ In turn, Brenner argued that the breast-feeding issue was not as clear-cut as it might appear; presenting evidence to show that failure by mothers to feed their babies was often due to anxiety. She thought it would be interesting to see whether 'bombs or bugs' exacted the biggest toll on life. Under the circumstances Barrow and Brenner considered that the young baby would be safer under expert care in a proper nursery where defects and illnesses could be quickly spotted.¹⁴⁰ As Ferguson and Fitzgerald claimed: 'the production departments were pressing for action, [and] there were women who would go out to work whatever medical opinion might say about a mother's place.'¹⁴¹ If they had an economic need and mothers could ease the situation by working, they did so.

Even though welfare centres were available to mothers for their children, many had received little or no health supervision until war-work forced parents to send them to nurseries. Due to the lack of staff, the rapid growth of nursery schools or classes and their diffusion made medical and nursing supervision a problem. Medical officers found that more than one third of the children attending nursery classes showed signs of incipient malnutrition.¹⁴² Children suffering from bronchitis, rickets and

¹³⁹ Barrow, M. H., 'Infants in Day Nurseries', *The Lancet* (November 2, 1940), p. 569.

¹⁴⁰ Brenner, D., *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 193.

¹⁴² Wellcome Collection, School Medical Officer, 'Annual report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1942.

general debility received artificial sunlight treatment using ultra-violet ray lamps.¹⁴³

Natural sunlight for children was an important element of Benslyn's design at Brearley Street Nursery School.¹⁴⁴ Children's speech seemed to rapidly improve in response to nursery school life and the company of others. When one three-year-old was admitted to nursery his speech was almost unintelligible but within a short time it had improved sufficiently for staff to understand every word. Not all children had speech difficulties; following several nights of heavy raids one four-year-old was reported to say: 'D'you know, Hitler has been and drunk all our water'.¹⁴⁵ Her conclusion was possibly formed from conversations overheard following a water shortage after one particularly bad bombing raid.

Treatment for these children at clinics presented additional difficulties for the authorities. Industrial production could not afford to lose parents from the workplace while they took their child for treatment. With the co-operation of nursery staff, individuals or groups of children were conveyed to and from clinics for medical care.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, in an attempt to reduce industrial absenteeism of parents due to minor childhood illnesses, a sickbay was created. Two hundred and thirteen nursery children were treated in a sick bay opened on the first floor of the wartime nursery at the YWCA, College Walk, Selly Oak. The sick bay was used for the treatment of

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1938, 1942.

¹⁴⁴ As seen in Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

¹⁴⁵ *Birmingham Post*, 'In war time' (April 4, 1941), p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Wellcome Collection, School Medical Officer, 'Annual report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1942.

minor ailments, such as ear discharge, which could keep children at home and prevent their mothers from working.¹⁴⁷

Existing health campaigns were built upon while new ones were established. In the prevention of diphtheria, historian Harold Black suggests that the city 'was a pioneer and one of the most successful exponents in the country for its immunisation'. The city's intensive campaign before the war to immunise children from eight months against the disease was responsible for its low incidence in nurseries during the hostilities.¹⁴⁸ For those not already immunised on admission to nurseries, immunisation was available, with practically 100% of parents taking advantage of the offer.¹⁴⁹ Even though Birmingham was advanced in the prevention of diphtheria, '[it] was only three years after the immunisation of pre-school children commenced on a large scale at the Welfare Centres in 1940 that a real and continued fall in the incidence of diphtheria occurred'. Reported incidence statistics declined from 1,142 in 1936 to 323 in 1946.¹⁵⁰

The rapidly changing child population made investigations over a long period difficult to complete. Not all programmes were successful and one experiment to establish whether whooping cough immunisation would reduce the incidence of the disease amongst the city's day nursery population failed to reach a useful conclusion. The lack of medical staff to carry out this programme resulted in it taking more than twelve

¹⁴⁷ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1943.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1945; Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

¹⁵⁰ Black, H. J., *History of the Corporation of Birmingham, volume VI, 1936-1950* (Birmingham, 1957), p. 250.

months to complete the immunisation of children, and this in turn reduced the value of the experiment from a statistical point of view. It is probable, although not conclusively proven, that this and the following programmes were linked to Dr Beaumont who was also responsible for the medical health of children attending Garrison Lane Nursery. Beaumont 'employed a mixed vaccine for protective inoculation of whooping cough contacts'. She was satisfied that the attacks had been appreciably lessened in severity and complications reduced.¹⁵¹ Adult health was not ignored either: out of a total staff of 1,335 in wartime nurseries, 1,266 submitted themselves for mass miniature radiography to diagnose tuberculosis (TB) when offered.¹⁵²

Medical surveys or investigations were carried out by a number of organisations. Under the auspices of the Medical Women's Federation, Dr Margaret McLaughlin carried out the second part of an investigation into the health of children attending Ministry of Health wartime day nurseries between 1944 and 1945 in Birmingham.¹⁵³ Prior to that, an investigation comparing children attending day nurseries against those presenting at welfare centres was carried out, involving seventy-three medical officers around the country. Even though the results were published, the findings from the study were considered to be limited, necessitating further research.¹⁵⁴ Birmingham was selected for the follow-up investigation which was intended to be an in-depth study. Periodic examinations were made comparing children attending

¹⁵¹ Wellcome Collection, School Medical Officer, 'Annual report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

¹⁵² Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

¹⁵³ McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part I, *The British Medical Journal* (May 3, 1947), pp. 591-594.

¹⁵⁴ Martin, W. J., 'The Health of Children in Wartime Day Nurseries', *ibid.* (August 17, 1946), pp. 217-221.

Birmingham wartime nurseries against a control group of children living in their own home over a twelve-month period. The investigation results were based on a total of 3,250 examinations of children from 0-5 years, comprising 557 who attended day nurseries and 641 living at home.¹⁵⁵ In terms of general health, the results of the investigation showed that children under two years of age fared less well than their older counterparts. Appendix 10 contains a summary of the survey results.

From the outset plans to provide wartime nurseries raised medical concerns about the psychological damage which could be created by children's early separation from their mother and the possible increase in infection rates. Ministry of Information propaganda attempted to allay mothers' concerns about leaving their under-fives early in life. The message in one film was that it was surely a small sacrifice to pay for what should be a better future post-war which would include nursery provision as part of re-development.¹⁵⁶ Theoretically, nurseries provided stability and a relatively safe and calm environment for mothers to leave their children. Blatz described how, the day after one particular air raid, the children slept much longer and 'the parents were obviously grateful for the serenity of the nursery school'.¹⁵⁷ The impact of these establishments extended beyond the school itself.

Child safety in nurseries was not guaranteed and a number of claims for damages from parents began to appear before the local Maternity and Child Welfare Committee. For example, one twenty-two-month-old, sustained burns and was

¹⁵⁵ McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part II, *ibid.* (May 10, 1947), pp. 631-634.

¹⁵⁶ British Film Institute, Film Identifier 13904, *Five and Under* (1941) [Online], www.bfi.org.uk (Accessed: July 3, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernhardt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

admitted to hospital after pulling the hook of a fireguard from the wall.¹⁵⁸ Another girl's finger was trapped in the hinge of a French window, requiring out-patient treatment for a month, and one boy who was escorted by a nursery staff member to the dentist to have two teeth painted, actually had three extracted. However, the coroner considered that the death of a three-month-old poorly nourished baby due to cardiac failure could easily have happened at home.¹⁵⁹

Numerous outbreaks of childhood infections occurred within the nurseries.¹⁶⁰ Medical and nursery staff throughout the war dealt with epidemics such as chicken pox, diarrhoea, German measles and catarrhal infections.¹⁶¹ Local officials blamed the neglect and malnourishment of some children for the frequent easy spread of infection.¹⁶² McLaughlin's survey showed a higher incidence of infection and the occurrence of poorer posture in the nursery group whereas weight and overall condition of this group was better than that of the home group. Overall, the under-twos did not fare as well as the older children. Official reflections following the hostilities considered that if the wartime nursery scheme had been restricted to two- to five-year-olds, then uneasiness about high infection rates and concerns about physiological damage due to separation from the mother would have been allayed.¹⁶³ If implemented, this strategy would have facilitated the organisation of a wartime

¹⁵⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (February 17, 1943).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. (December 11, 1942, April 13 and May 19, 1943); Professionally applied fluoride solutions evolved in the 1940s and were painted onto the teeth to reduce decay and crumbling of a tooth. Ijaz, S., 'Professionally Applied Fluoride Paint-on Solutions (PAFS): Closing the gaps in the evidence base for the appropriate use of topical fluorides', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (Queen Mary University, London, 2013).

¹⁶⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1943-1944).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid. (April 19, 1944).

¹⁶³ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 210.

nursery system while conversely depriving local industry of a large proportion of its female workforce. The investigation only considered the physical health and not the psychological development or well-being of the child. Even though not carried out in a scientific manner, the results of the Stanford-Binet tests by Blatz's team at Garrison Lane indicated an increase in the intelligence of children attending their nursery.¹⁶⁴ The weight gain noted in the day-nursery children in McLaughlin's study was probably due to the extra food. Each child was provided with two or three well-planned generous meals a day without mothers forfeiting their child's ration coupons, and this supplemented food at home.¹⁶⁵ The Canadians' experience of weight gain with children attending Garrison Lane was similar.¹⁶⁶ Birmingham's experience demonstrated how early assumptions that the health of children was at risk if attending wartime nurseries was not necessarily the case. Instead, these establishments offered opportunities not previously presented for regular health checks, treatment and immunisation programmes for children and staff.

End of the hostilities

The closure of wartime nurseries is as complex as their development so an in-depth study is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this section explores the feasibility of the LEA retaining wartime nurseries. Although Birmingham LEA was interested in retaining some of the nurseries created during the hostilities, many could not be kept on after the war. The land and properties used were not always

¹⁶⁴ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

¹⁶⁵ McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part II, *The British Medical Journal* (May 10, 1947), pp. 631-634.

¹⁶⁶ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. 248-249.

owned by Birmingham Council.¹⁶⁷ For example, two houses converted into one nursery on the Coventry Road were rented for £50 per year and post-war the owner intended to convert them into flats.¹⁶⁸ Some land used in Birmingham to erect hutments was on parkland or was the subject of requisition under emergency powers which presumably ended at the close of war.¹⁶⁹ Research has revealed that the annual rent paid for land commandeered in wartime Cheshire ranged from 1s to £5 per annum. Unless these payments increased there was little incentive for landowners to let the hutments remain.¹⁷⁰ However, at the cessation of war, fifteen of the temporary hutments were transferred from Public Health to the Education Department for use as nursery schools.¹⁷¹ The variety of experimentation in terms of buildings used for nurseries during the war helped to guide post-war re-development. Local officials considered that these simple and inexpensive buildings were conducive to the creation of a happy and intimate atmosphere. After the war they decided to continue with that approach even though larger buildings were more cost-effective in terms of capital outlay and maintenance.¹⁷² Though it was impossible to retain all of the wartime nurseries established, the Second World War was a period of innovation and experimentation providing a legacy upon which Birmingham LEA was able to build in terms of experience and by increasing their pre-school building stock.

¹⁶⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (April 13, 1945).

¹⁶⁸ TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries (June 21, 1940).

¹⁶⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

¹⁷⁰ CA&LS, CCD 1/3/6, Agreement for the lease of properties as War-time Nurseries (1942-1944).

¹⁷¹ Isaacs, G., 'The Development of the War-time City Day Nursery in Birmingham: An Oral History', *Birmingham Historian* (March, 2001), volume 19, pp. 13-18.

¹⁷² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1/2, Adams, M. G. R, Unpublished, City of Birmingham Education Committee Report 1934-1947, pp. 75-76.

Conclusion

This chapter considers how and to what extent a system of wartime nurseries developed in Birmingham between 1939 and 1945 by examining four dimensions: how the system was created; the actual provision in terms of nursery buildings; social relationships within these institutions and the wider environment; and the way in which healthcare was an important component of what was provided. Opening this quantity of nurseries during the hostilities was extremely challenging. Due to the circumstances under which this facility grew, it was impossible to create a plan in advance. Experimentation into elementary educational buildings, including those for pre-school childcare, was already taking place in Birmingham before the Second World War. Benslyn's nursery school design was considered unique at the time and indicated the beginning of a broader plan to provide more nursery schools in the city. The wartime situation was fluid, and creativity was required in order to adapt the variety of buildings used for this purpose. Local people did not always recognise that these establishments were an advantage and there were instances of theft and damage. However, wartime nurseries became a valuable asset to the local authorities. Nurseries enabled them to monitor the social conditions of those attending, providing opportunities to improve the health of the children and staff. The medical profession had access to the establishments on a regular basis, facilitating the implementation of immunisation programmes for the children and of mass miniature radiography (TB screening) for the nursery staff. By demonstrating how wartime nursery buildings were prepared, this chapter illustrates how the authorities reached out to wider segments of the local population than would have been possible under normal circumstances. The following chapter describes how Birmingham

officials accomplished the formidable challenge of recruiting sufficient staff to work in the wartime nursery sector, by continuing to address the second part of key question four: to what extent and in what ways did Birmingham's pre-school childcare system secure the buildings and internal features and shape the educational experiences (Chapter 7) and staffing (Chapter 8), it needed to operate effectively?

CHAPTER 8: NURSERY NURSING IN BIRMINGHAM 1939-1945: RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Introduction

Wartime nurseries were created to cater for pre-school childcare so that mothers could be released into the workforce, but they became one more demand on already depleted national labour resources. Due to the war, nursery provision in Birmingham quickly increased from eight to two hundred and seventy-five institutions. Those women previously experienced in nursery provision could not possibly meet the demand for work as teachers. By creating a large wartime nursery scheme Birmingham officials not only had to find more women for local industry but also staff for the nurseries from an already reduced source. Government officials anticipated that volunteers would play a large part in supporting these establishments, but it soon became clear that they failed to provide a reliable workforce. Without a suitable nursery workforce local industry would suffer even larger labour shortages. In addition to the main nursery staff caring for the children, employees were also required to carry out various domestic duties in these establishments. Nursery staff shortages were a pre-occupation for all local authorities throughout the war, particularly in Birmingham and women working in nurseries could only be recruited from the groups not included in the compulsory call-up to the forces or industry. The practicality of staffing wartime nurseries became a complex system of recruitment, training and retention, particularly in Birmingham where a large number of establishments were created. If wartime nurseries were not just to become one enormous childminding exercise for the duration of the hostilities, training schemes had to be put in place. Local pressures were increased because Birmingham also

became the epicentre of training for Civil Defence Area 9. The shortfall of nursery staff was partially alleviated by a national initiative whereby untrained women were recruited and completed short training courses to create a Child Care Reserve (CCR). Delivering wartime nursery staff and training was complicated due to the variety of roles required within these establishments and the differing academic abilities previously reached by applicants. Recruitment and training were carried out within the wartime arena of air raids, labour movement or shortages, and evacuation. Nursery work was not necessarily attractive, wages were low and staff could catch childhood infections. Cultural differences also emerged between staff, trainers, trainees and the recipients of the service which needed to be addressed. Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre, organised by Dr William Blatz and his Canadian Team, played an important part in providing training of staff for Birmingham's extensive wartime nursery project. Without this extensive female workforce, wartime nurseries could not have existed as places for child development as opposed to a childminding service. By using Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre as a case study, this chapter offers a glimpse into a group of people previously hidden from view.

Secondary material is of little help in framing the local workforce, so the necessary focus is on primary sources to understand the staffing needed to operate effectively. This chapter investigates the creation of a wartime nursery workforce in Birmingham between 1939 and 1945 from an administrative and social perspective through three themes: recruitment, training and retention. Two questions are used to interrogate a wide range of primary source material. Firstly, where did this workforce come from and to what extent did the political, economic, demographic and cultural elements

stimulate or impede their recruitment? Secondly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its recruitment, training and retention and were there constraints? It intends to do this by investigating how a large suitable workforce was secured. The training itself and its relevance from the trainers' and trainees' perspective are explored. Finally, consideration is given to the retention of this workforce before attempting to quantify the economic value of pre-school childcare against the number of mothers released for industrial war-work. Interwoven through the study is an analysis of the cultural clashes that were experienced, before the final conclusions are drawn together and discussed. Data have been collated from a number of sources to consider Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre as a case study. These include government circulars, local minutes, and official correspondence. This study benefited from Blatz's archival collection held by the University of Toronto, along with the private collection of Mary J Wright.

Staffing wartime nurseries

Teachers were required to run the wartime nurseries if they were not to just become a minding service. By the Second World War nursery education was still in an early stage of development, and therefore the training of staff to work in these establishments was in a similar position. The number of people already trained in nursery education was low and therefore could not possibly meet the predicted demand. Large-scale training schemes had to be put in place. Volunteers were expected to form the majority of the workforce required for wartime nurseries and local press appeals invited volunteers to register in preparation for being called upon

when required.¹ Judging on past experience, Birmingham's Medical Officer of Health, Dr Ethel Cassie, was doubtful about receiving any response to appeals for voluntary help.² Also volunteers usually only wanted to give eight to ten hours of their time per week and did not wish to cover early or late shifts. Planning effective nursery cover within these parameters was impossible and government officials learnt that volunteers should be regarded as an extra source rather than an integral part of the staff.³ It was impossible to predict how long the hostilities would last so simply providing women to watch the children was not an option: something more professional was required. Supervising large groups of pre-school children required relevant skills. It was thought that if they were interested, certificated teachers experienced in teaching older children could receive additional training in order to work with under-fives but those teachers were already in short supply as many had accompanied evacuated children or taught those who remained at home. The Ministry of Health and Board of Education agreed that 'skilled supervision of the day-time activities of the children over two years of age is essential to the efficient conduct of the nurseries'.⁴ In order to meet this objective, any staff recruited to work in wartime nurseries required suitable training; first, however, they had to be recruited.

¹ *Birmingham Post*, 'Day Nursery' (September 27, 1940), p. 5.

² TNA, MH52/765, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Report (June 21, 1940).

³ TNA, T161/1190-2, Treasury, Ministry of Health and Department of Health for Scotland, Provision of day nurseries for children of women engaged on government work.

⁴ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Joint circular Board of Education 1609 and Ministry of Health 2710, The staffing of war-time nurseries and nursery classes with special reference to educational requirements (October 29, 1942).

Recruitment

Staff recruited to work in wartime nurseries came from a variety of backgrounds – teaching, nursing, and private nannies or those with no training whatsoever.

Recruitment was not straightforward: to comply with female conscription certain groups of women were excluded from employment in wartime nurseries. The nursery workforce therefore came from those members of the population not eligible for conscription due to age, or domestic responsibilities. Billeting was required for the incoming industrial workforce, so therefore it made sense for nursery staff to be recruited locally. However, the size of the workforce required meant that women had to be recruited nationwide as local availability could not meet the demand. Due to the complexity of the workplaces, it was not possible to have one universal job description for each role, so flexibility was the order of the day. As the demand for nursery workers in Birmingham arose earlier than in other areas, local officials had to pre-empt central government guidance if they were to provide sufficient staff for their wartime nurseries.

In May 1940, the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare proposed to the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education that a Child Care Reserve (CCR) should be established to recruit and train women to work in wartime nurseries and supplement qualified nursery staff. Their proposal to establish a CCR was accepted, so its members would receive training to carry out emergency work with children, and this included the various types of wartime nurseries described in earlier chapters. Courses using an approved syllabus were to be organised by LEAs and upon completion the student would be eligible to work for the duration of the war at the

level appropriate for the training completed.⁵ Skilled professionals were expected to carry out the training sessions applicable to their medical, nutritional or educational expertise. Training sessions covered a number of subjects, appropriately related to the level of course, and included care of the nursery environment, how to structure the child's day, child hygiene, infections, development and social involvement.⁶

Successful candidates were issued with a membership card (Figure 8.1) along with a statement confirming their level of qualification which was achieved by attending the requisite number of lectures, completing an examination and carrying out an appropriate number of hours of practical work. CCR training provided accreditation at three levels of wartime nursery qualification:

Junior Course – girls 16-18 years to work as nursery helpers

Senior Course – women 18-19 and those over 31 not yet registered

Supplementary Course – prospective wardens of wartime nurseries or classes.

⁵ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 199-201.

⁶ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Circular 1599, Childcare Reserve Courses, Syllabus (July 17, 1942).

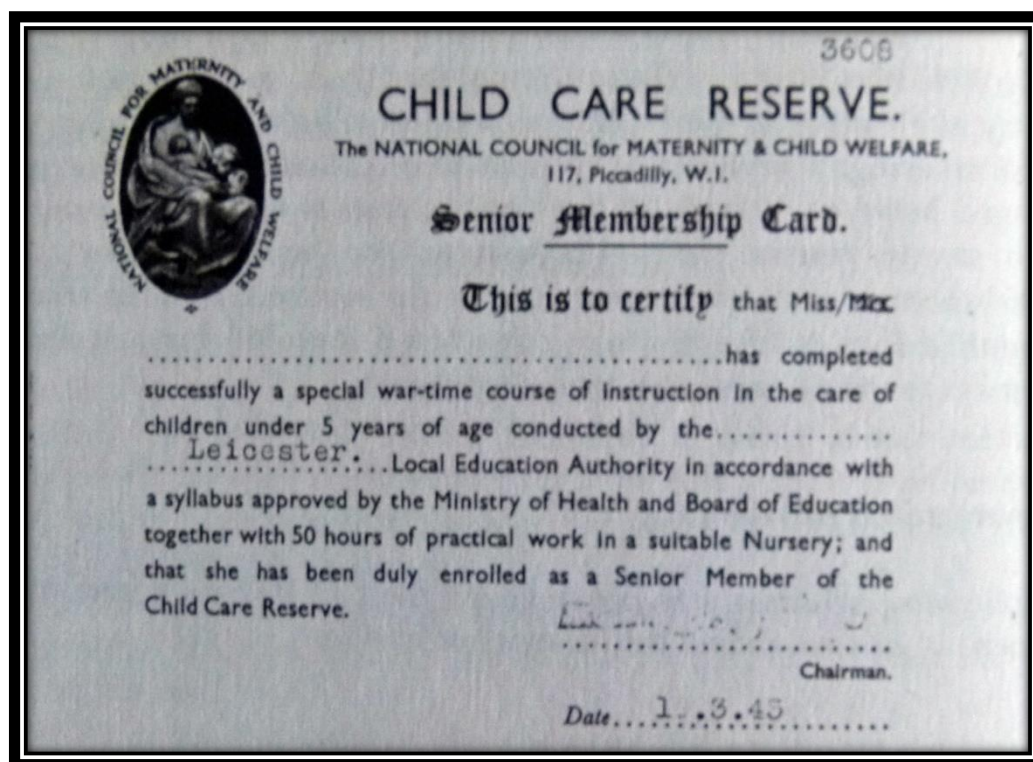


Figure 8.1: Child Care Reserve Senior Membership Card⁷

In reality, because of the constant shortage of staff, it was possible that these standards were not always attained. From the outset it was clear that all of these qualifications were only for the duration of the war and additional training would be required if the girls or women wanted to continue working within the nursery system after the war. Official guidance regarding eligibility to apply for these posts and the level at which they could work was not as clear as it could have been, and this led to confusion not only on the part of candidates but also among those who were meant to direct them. Staff at the labour exchanges did not understand the recruitment process: *Nursery World* reported that applicants who presented themselves at these

⁷ Wright, B., *A History of the National Nursery Examination Board* (St. Albans, 1999), p. 28.

establishments as interested in this work were being deterred by the 'unsatisfactory reception'.⁸

Birmingham's first wartime nurseries opened in October 1940. Central guidance on appropriate staffing structures for these was not released until July 1941. For those admitting children of all ages up to five years, it was suggested that a matron, deputy matron, warden, assistants comprising nursery-trained nurses, members of the CCR, probationers, and helpers, were required. For a nursery admitting children over two years, the staff should normally consist of a teacher supervising a group of nurseries, and a warden, with one or more helpers. In an isolated nursery for children over two years, the staff should consist of a warden with one or more helpers. The suggested qualifications and experience for each role are displayed in Chart 8.1, created from data extrapolated from a joint circular distributed by the Ministry of Health and Board of Education in July 1941.⁹ It is probable that at times, due to the shortage of staff available for nurseries, there was some deviation from and flexibility within this guidance.¹⁰

⁸ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Editors topics' (May 21, 1942), p. 453.

⁹ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Memorandum 249-III A (England), Ministry of Health enclosure to Circular 2435 and Board of Education Circular 1558, War-time Nurseries (July, 1941).

¹⁰ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence (August 19, 1943).

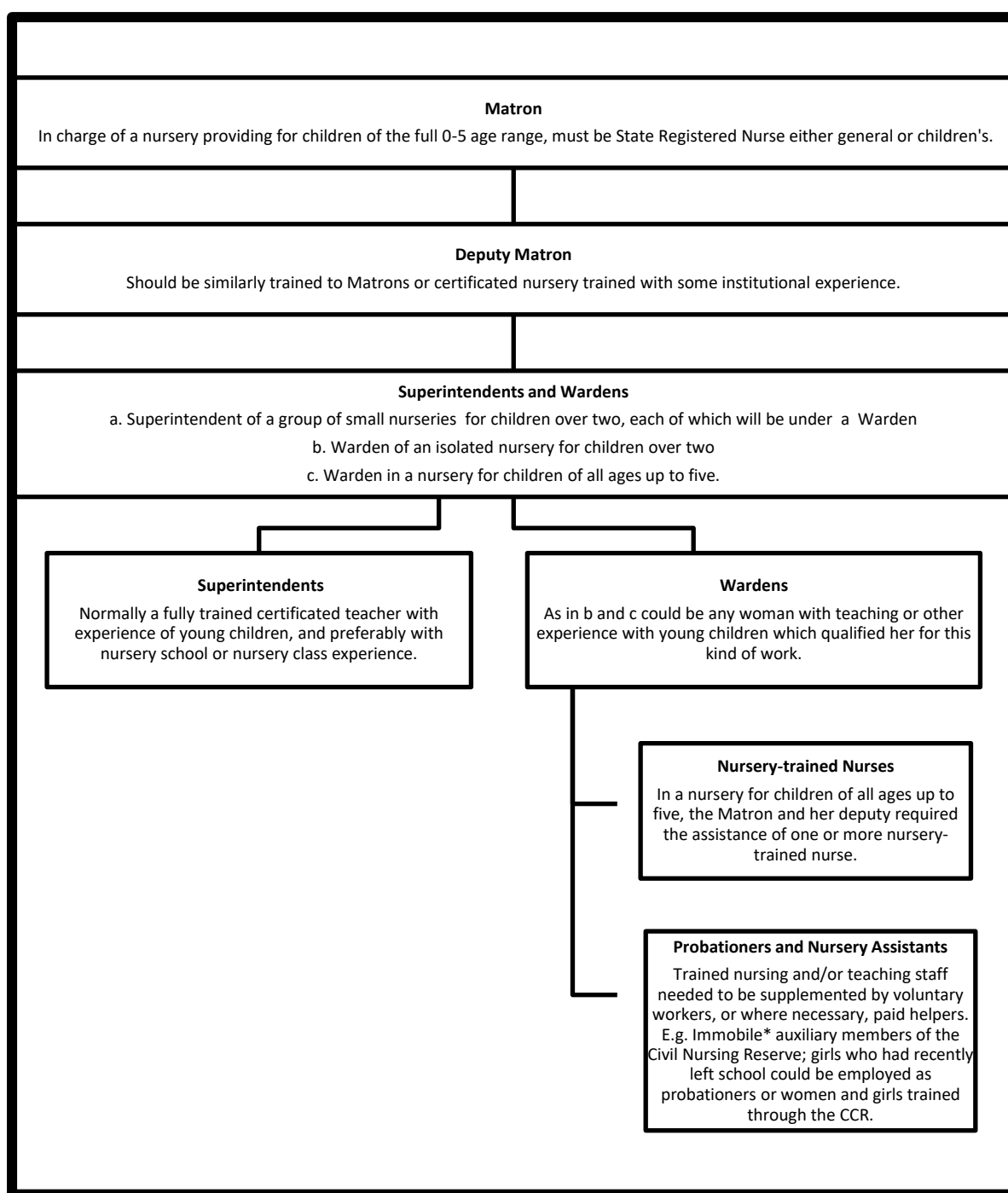


Chart 8.1: Guidance on the suggested qualifications or experience of staff appointed to work in wartime nurseries ¹¹

¹¹ Data for Chart 8.1 extrapolated from TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Memorandum 249-III A (England), Ministry of Health enclosure to Circular 2435 and Board of Education Circular 1558, War-time Nurseries (July, 1941).

Nationally, even though women trained in the care of pre-school children were in great demand, there was not a central point for registering those qualified and available for nursery work. Without one central department it was impossible to co-ordinate any resource effectively and confusion arose. This resulted in some women applying to the 'Women's Employment Federation, others to the Nursery School Association' or W.V.S., both at central and local offices, while the CCR also received applications.¹²

Originally, it was expected that nursery staff would live locally to reduce the pressures of finding suitable billets; it was also hoped that those applying for CCR training would be local applicants who would remain and work in the city nurseries once training was completed. Because Birmingham officials required such a large quantity of staff for their nurseries, outsiders had to be accommodated. Once women were employed in a wartime nursery, the Ministry of Labour was not able to ask them to transfer to other war-work, whatever their age.¹³ When training was completed, placing the appropriate person in the available vacancies was a logistical problem. Nursery workers wanted to work close to home, probably to reduce their time travelling and the cost involved by using transport. Home commitments and negotiating the route following raids may not have encouraged a long journey. The refunding of travelling expenses was not a benefit available to nursery staff although locally it was thought that this may have encouraged women to consider working further from home. Birmingham officials suggested a scheme to the Ministry of

¹² TNA, CAB118/87, Cabinet Office, A department for child welfare (Author and year unidentified), p. 7.

¹³ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Ministry of Health, Provision of day nurseries for children of munition workers, Helping with children is a real war job (May, 1942); TBL, Lou.Lon 350, *Nursery World*, 'War-time nurseries' and 'Registration of Nursery Nurses' (June 11, 1941), p. 557.

Health in May 1944 under which staff paying over three shillings and six pence a week for their journey to work in a nursery should be able to claim the difference. It is not clear whether this proposal was approved, but local officials were obviously exploring a number of options since a Nursery Nurse Hostel was opened in August 1944 at 31 Langley Road, Small Heath, to try to ease the situation.¹⁴ Using local labour for the nurseries had other advantages. Their knowledge of the local conditions and characteristics of the community meant that parents regarded them as more understanding in the care of their children. The National Society of Day Nurseries (NSDA) considered that the 'Co-operation between parent and nursery is an essential factor in the success of the scheme'.¹⁵ Blatz and his team encouraged parental participation at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre.

Nursery staff shortages meant that the opening of nurseries could be delayed, sometimes for a matter of months.¹⁶ Misinterpretation of official guidance could create unintended obstacles: for example, stories circulated, according to which pre-school children could not attend the nursery where their mother was employed. Concerned that this might be the cause of Birmingham's recruitment issues, central officials questioned whether the Midland region had such a rule, and suggested that if this was the case, their target for staff would never be reached. It was regular practice in Birmingham for nursery staff to have their own child in the same nursery or at least in close proximity to where they were employed. Blatz mentioned taking on an additional member of staff, a mother who was keen to have her child attend

¹⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (May 17, 1944).

¹⁵ TNA, MH55/695, Ministry of Health, The National Society of Day Nurseries, 'Day nurseries in time of war: Their relation to the employment of women in industry' (March, 1940).

¹⁶ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Report by Lady Reading on visit to Birmingham (September 13-16, 1943).

Garrison Lane Nursery.¹⁷ Even though such a regulation did not exist in Birmingham, Coventry's Medical Officer of Health took the view that such a situation was undesirable; however, once approached, he was prepared to fall into line with others.¹⁸

Bomb damage to homes or changes to family commitments meant that women had to move around the city or even out of the area. The constant movement of the population due to hostilities left wartime nurseries in a vulnerable position for establishing a stable workforce and maintaining standards. This was an issue that officials were keen to monitor. However, following a visit to Birmingham, Lady Reading, Midland Regional Advisor on Childcare, considered that the standard of nurseries in the region was constantly improving. Local nurseries were inspected on a regular basis – at least every six months, sometimes more often – since it was recognised that with the constant fluctuation of staff, a nursery could easily deteriorate.¹⁹

Volunteers could make an important contribution to nurseries, even if only on a casual basis. A central department was not created to direct or co-ordinate volunteers, which probably did not enable effective use of this unpaid workforce. Collaboration between the Birmingham authorities and educational institutions took place in the hope that it would result in extra nursery help. In July 1941, Westhill Training College, Selly Oak, used wartime nurseries as an opportunity to supplement

¹⁷ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

¹⁸ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Various correspondence (July 28, 1943).

¹⁹ Ibid., 'Lady Reading report on visit to Birmingham' (September 13-16, 1943).

its student nursery nurses' training. Permission was obtained to send these trainees to nurseries managed by the local Public Health Department to complete six months of practical training. They were placed under the control of the Public Health Committee which felt that, by approving this request, the number of volunteers at the nurseries would increase.²⁰ During 1943, the College recorded how students took a pre-school course and also a combined pre-school and nursery nurses' course. The number of students involved in this collaboration is unclear but capacity for most courses held at Westhill Training College was small.²¹

In 1942 Birmingham Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) received requests for a considerable number of volunteers to release nursery staff while they attended lectures. Some WVS groups 'adopted' a local nursery which they supported by providing volunteer helpers and assisted in other ways.²² Even towards the end of the hostilities voluntary help was still required and accepted. There was little for local Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) girls and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) to do at their headquarters, so they helped out in nurseries, but attendance was sporadic and of short duration.²³

Birmingham officials explored many different options in their efforts to recruit nursery staff. In November 1943, aware of the success of other authorities and subject to Ministry of Labour and National Service approval, Birmingham Public Health

²⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

²¹ CRL, WC/Box 263, Westhill College Collection, Principal's report to members of Westhill Council (November, 1943).

²² WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018), September and October 1942.

²³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 15, 1944).

Committee considered recruiting staff for its wartime nurseries from Eire.²⁴ However, by obtaining staff recruited from outside the area to work in nurseries, they might actually be exacerbating the problem that they were trying to relieve, providing nursery places for the pre-school children of mothers in war industry. For example, some women recruited for nursery work arrived in the area pregnant or with a young child requiring care. Evidence shows that Birmingham authorities had to provide a wartime nursery place for the child of one Irish woman who came to work in nursery education, and this was probably not an isolated case. Enlisting staff from outside the area for nurseries was not always successful as the women often felt lonely and isolated. In an effort to reduce the number of women sent to work in Birmingham wartime nurseries from returning home, the Ministry of Health provided their details to the WVS, requesting that it should provide hospitality and direct them towards other social activities when not working.²⁵

Private nannies of the middle and upper classes were encouraged into the forces, industry or wartime childcare although their potential loss was not taken quietly by their employers. Disgruntled middle- or upper-class mothers, upset at the prospect of losing their nanny, used the *Nursery World* letters page as a platform to voice their concerns. One correspondent described how many mothers managed to raise their family without a nanny – although they usually did so with the services of a maid or daily-help, now almost impossible to find during the war. She suggested that many mothers were ‘not strong enough to carry another baby when there is all the

²⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 12, 1943).

²⁵ WRVS, Archives and Heritage Collection, WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/NR/R9/1939-1945-CB/BGH, Birmingham Narrative Reports 1939-1945 [Online], <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk> (Accessed: August 31, 2018), May, June and September, 1943.

housework, cooking and children to look after'; and she noted how different it was 'if a mother can rest with her legs up in the afternoon, knowing that her children are happily out for a walk'. She regarded this as a necessity, not a luxury 'in order to avoid over-fatigue and resultant troubles'.²⁶ Mothers of pre-school children carrying out war-work probably considered all of these points a luxury. Another middle-class mother carrying out voluntary work felt that the 'whole structure of our lives will collapse if an equally efficient substitute for my nannie cannot be found'.²⁷ At least the first correspondent had the propriety to suggest that those private nannies who really wanted to carry out war-work should use their skills by working with the young children rather than entering factories.²⁸ *Nursery World* was also used as a platform by private nannies interested in working in wartime nurseries to highlight their frustrations. One nanny with fourteen years of experience questioned why a college-trained or certificated nurse, straight from college, or with only one year's experience, could hold one of the senior nursery posts whereas she herself had to begin as a helper along with inexperienced people and earn less than she currently did.²⁹ Under these circumstances industrial employment might sound a better option to these women. Eventually, this anomaly was addressed under a new public health scheme by providing two months' free nursery college training to uncertificated children's nurses with not less than six years' experience in private families. This opened the senior posts to a wider range of women by providing those accustomed to dealing

²⁶ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'War-work' (February 19, 1942), p. 227.

²⁷ TBL, Lou.Lon 350, *Nursery World*, 'Readers Letters' (August 27, 1941), p. 793.

²⁸ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'War-work' (February 19, 1942), p. 227.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 'In a war nursery' (May 7, 1942), p. 429.

with young children with the administrative skills required to manage wartime nurseries.³⁰

Women conscientious objectors provided a possible additional source of employees for caring roles such as those in hospitals and wartime nurseries. Evidence suggests that they were being directed towards nursery work in the city both locally and from outside the district but their numbers were not high enough to make a significant impact. The outcome of Birmingham's first tribunal of 'Women Conchies' was reported in 1942, when it was agreed to their being placed on the register of conscientious objectors provided that they undertook work such as in hospitals, nursing, civil defence or nurseries.³¹ Conscientious objector Florence Salway was guided to Birmingham from Brighton to train with Blatz and his team.³² In her oral testimony Salway did not mention experiencing any hostility due to her beliefs from fellow trainees, work colleagues or the children's parents. It is unclear how Lady Allen of Hurtwood's 1941 suggestion to use 'friendly aliens' as part of the nursery workforce to alleviate the staff shortages was received or whether the idea was adopted nationally.³³ Locally however out of a total of 930 nursery staff on March 15, 1944 there were sixteen 'aliens' employed whose roles were not confined to the lower positions.³⁴ The friendly aliens' country of origin may have determined the type

³⁰ Ibid., 'College Training' and 'Senior Posts' (December 24, 1942), p. 73.

³¹ *Birmingham Mail*, 'Women Conchies' (May 19, 1942), p. 1.

³² TBL, C880/06/01, Sound and Moving Image Collection, Women Conscientious Objectors, Interview with Florence Salway (July 25, 1997).

³³ Lady Allen of Hurtwood was chairman of the Nursery School Association of Great Britain (1942-8), then its president (1948-1951). Moggridge, H., 'Allen (nee Gill), Marjory, Lady Allen of Hurtwood (1897-1976)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: September 20, 2018); MRC, MSS 121/NS/3/2/14, Correspondence from Lady Allen of Hurtwood to The Times (June 30, 1941).

³⁴ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries'. This

of reception they received but it is probably fair to say that this workforce may not always have been welcomed. Not surprisingly, people were curious about Blatz. His ethnicity was a topic of discussion among his students: 'if he [Blatz] ain't a Jew, she'll eat her hat. The gesticulations! – and she's just taken a good side – view of his conk [nose]'.³⁵ In their view this obviously confirmed their thoughts; however, nothing was mentioned of his German-sounding name or ancestry.

Whether they came for training purposes or to work in wartime nurseries, the experience of newcomers to Birmingham did not always mirror those of the Canadian women. CCR trainee Florence Salway, a conscientious objector, was full of misgivings when she came to the city to train with the Canadian Team. She was met in a church hall where digs were allocated within cycling distance of Garrison Lane. The first group of Canadian Team members was accommodated with the Cadbury family in Selly Oak and was transported by a private car provided by the LEA.³⁶ Accommodation at the Hagley Court Hotel was arranged for the second group of Canadian women but normally nursery staff lived close to their place of work. Never having lived away from Brighton, Salway found living on an unidentified 'slum clearance estate' an illuminating experience somewhat different from the relative comfort experienced by the Canadian women accommodated in suburbs such as Selly Oak or Edgbaston. Following her training, Salway was put in charge of a nursery class working with two- to five-year-olds whose mothers were working in factories. Similarly to the Canadians' experience, Salway found that the children she

alien workforce consisted of four wardens, five staff nurses, one assistant nurse, three childcare nurses and three students.

³⁵ CRL, MS806/1, Letters from Dorothy Walker to Stanley Chamberlain (1942, 1943).

³⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

worked with had nits, scabies and other ailments and during her oral interview, the reservist explained how she had never before met people like those in Birmingham. The health of some women deteriorated quickly when they arrived in the city. Nursery workers were not immune to this experience. How long Salway worked in the city is unclear, but while she was there, her health deteriorated to such an extent, with recurring bouts of tonsillitis, that a doctor suggested that the air did not suit her and she should return home. Canadian Team member, Nancy Griffin, also experienced significant illness while working in Birmingham, and she required hospital admittance (Figure 8.2).³⁷ Unlike Salway, recurring illness did not prompt Griffin to return home.

BIRMINGHAM UNITED HOSPITAL
THE GENERAL HOSPITAL THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL
THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, BIRMINGHAM, 15.
ADMISSION CARD FOR ONE VISITOR FOR USE
ON VISITING DAYS ONLY

Visiting Days are—SUNDAYS and } From 2 p.m.
WEDNESDAYS } to 3-30 p.m.

Name of Patient *Miss Griffin*
Ward *East B.*

SPECIAL NOTE :—Patients are allowed two visitors only at the bedside at one time, and these must leave the Wards and hand over their visiting cards before any other visitors can proceed to the Wards.
No patient is allowed more than four visitors during any one visiting period.
Children under 12 years of age are not admitted as visitors.

Ref. C.H.136, G. 10,000/12/41.

**Figure 8.2: The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham
Visitor's admission card**³⁸

Apart from her ill health, Salway seemed to enjoy working with the children; however, that was not the case for everyone. Salway recalled one Norland Nanny at a

³⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 18, 1943).

³⁸ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Eleanor Hamilton Scrapbooks 1 and 2.

Birmingham nursery who felt that the position was well below her training and status, an attitude not shown by the Canadian Team. In fact, Blatz worked with his team on practical tasks whenever necessary.³⁹ He created toys and equipment to furnish the nursery, helped with the initial bathing routine and, like the women in his team, was rewarded with bites from some of the children's 'nits'.⁴⁰ In actuality, status and background did not count for much in times of conflict, even for the Canadian Team.

In Birmingham by August 1943 exceptional measures had to be considered as the numbers of assistant matrons, student nurses and also CCR trainees began to decline, leaving five wartime nurseries unable to open through permanent lack of staff. By this time, even though wartime nurseries had gained central approval, evidenced by being fully funded by the government, Lady Reading suspected that Birmingham Welfare Authorities were deliberately blocking the opening of these five establishments.⁴¹ Wartime nursery staff shortages across the city were acute – by the following month amounting to five Matrons, six Deputy Matrons, fourteen Wardens and sixty-three Probationers.⁴² The local Ministry of Health was asked to consider the modification of its staffing recommendations. Lady Reading and Mr Boucher, the Senior Regional Officer for Region 9, hoped that by being allowed more flexibility in terms of the staffing structures, blockages could be eased.⁴³ This flexible approach was not only a local phenomenon; wartime nursery provision was

³⁹ Norland Nannies were trained at Norland College, London, founded in 1892 by Emily Ward who had recognised the need to make early years childcare more structured. Norland [Online], <http://www.norland.co.uk> (Accessed: October 17, 2013); TBL, C880/06/01, Sound and Moving Image Collection, Women Conscientious Objectors, Interview with Florence Salway (July 25, 1997).

⁴⁰ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

⁴¹ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence from Lady Reading to Dr Gorrie (August 19, 1943).

⁴² Ibid., 'Report on visit to Birmingham' (September 13-16, 1943).

⁴³ Ibid., 'Correspondence from Lady Reading to Dr Gorrie' (August 19, 1943).

constantly evolving. Previously in July 1942, the Ministry of Health suggested that Assistant Matrons need not be state registered nurses but could be nursery nurses with a national certificate plus institutional training. Considering that this deviation from the process was early in terms of opening wartime nurseries, the recommended standard of qualifications for staff was already being diluted in an effort to find sufficient workers.⁴⁴

As the war progressed, the problem of obtaining staff for wartime nurseries became even more acute, and by 1942 frustration was rising.⁴⁵ This situation was an ongoing problem, with Lady Reading in 1943 referring to Birmingham as being 'like a bottomless pit' in respect of staff.⁴⁶ Lady Reading was quick to investigate any missed opportunities to recruit or retain nursery staff. In 1942 in correspondence to Miss Puxley (Ministry of Health, Whitehall) she described how her pleasure at the possibility of attracting nursery staff had turned to disappointment overnight:

the Birmingham Labour Exchange told me yesterday that they had received permission from H.Q. to circulate Nationally the vacancies for Nurseries. I whooped with joy! At last there is a possibility of staffing and catching the Nursery Nurse. Today I was rather damped... Why oh! Why, should not these girls be asked to come into our nurseries if they are not on war work? Why should W.V.S. get them? ⁴⁷

Lady Reading's significant wartime roles occasionally came into conflict. As Midland Regional Advisor on Childcare, Chairman of the Council of the NSDN and Chairman of Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) her inside knowledge presumably put

⁴⁴ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 26.

⁴⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (April 10, 1942).

⁴⁶ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, (March 30, 1943), Report by Lady Reading on visit to Birmingham (September 13-16, 1943).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 'Correspondence from Lady Reading to Miss Puxley' (April 26, 1942).

Birmingham's urgent need for staff to cover childcare above that of the WVS.⁴⁸ In another incident after hearing of the dismissal of two 'nannies', Reading insisted that in future she must be informed of any similar cases beforehand. Because nursery staffing shortages were so desperate in Birmingham, Reading arranged for the local appointments officer to establish where these two 'nannies' were working, hoping to lure them back. During this exercise it became clear how, without local knowledge, the Ministry of Labour in London was granting permission for Birmingham-trained nursery staff to slip away to work in other areas of the country or in alternative employment. Reading insisted that, in future, local labour exchanges should be informed.⁴⁹

Managing this nursery workforce created new issues for local authorities. Their concern was not merely to retain personnel but also how to manage and support this largely inexperienced staff. The number of wardens employed as teachers in nurseries was beyond the competence of Birmingham public health officials to supervise.⁵⁰ An experiment was agreed between Blatz, Mr Arnold, H M Inspector, Board of Education, Mr Cousens, Birmingham's Deputy Chief of Education, Lady Reading and Dr O'Brien, Birmingham Board of Health. Three members of the Canadian Children's Service at Garrison Lane – Joyce Cornish-Bowden, Nancy Griffin and Mary McFarland (Smith) – acted as supervisors and teachers in the field. Each managed ten emergency nursery schools, which they visited for a week at a

⁴⁸ The National Society of Children's Nurseries (NSCN), originally known as the National Society of Day Nurseries, was founded in 1906 (the name was changed in 1942). LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, Biographical history.

⁴⁹ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, 'Report by Lady Reading on visit to Birmingham' (September 13-16, 1943).

⁵⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (March 10, 1944).

time. There they observed, recorded, rearranged areas causing difficulties and instructed the staff while trying to integrate health and education into these establishments. Blatz, proud of this experiment, explained to Clarence Hincks (Director of the Committee for Mental Hygiene of Canada) how the data being collected were 'amazingly valuable and the plan is [was] being adopted in other regions'; he went on to say how 'only lack of highly trained personnel prevents wider spread'.⁵¹ When it became clear that these Canadian supervisors were returning home, Birmingham public health officials considered it a matter of importance that the Education Department was asked to appoint suitable replacements. Adequate supervision needed to be found for the wardens, many of whom required support and advice to carry out their duties.⁵²

Like the children attending wartime nurseries, employees working there were also prone to illness which led to absences. In addition to sickness, there were a large number of applications for unpaid leave of absence, ranging from a day to weeks. Within the context of the time and the conditions everyone was living under, requests were reasonable, but finding suitable replacements was challenging. Reasons for the applications are not always clear but most were to deal with family illness, death and funerals. Some requests were for happier occasions such as a husband or son

⁵¹ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

⁵² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (March 10, 1944).

home on leave and family weddings. It is not clear how these absences were covered in the nurseries.⁵³

Local nursery workers were enterprising and did not circumvent self-help. They began to organise themselves, creating their own support network in the form of the Birmingham Wartime Nursery Nurses Guild. Nursery Matrons had their own association, nursery-school teachers likewise, and local nursery staff decided that they needed something similar. Following a meeting attended by one hundred and two of Birmingham's wartime nursery nurses, they decided to form their own guild. Membership was open to trained nursery nurses, child care reservists, student nursery nurses and wardens from nurseries or nursery schools. Within three weeks the guild had eighty members who recorded their aims as being:

To promote the interests of all nursery workers; to ensure the future of nurseries and nursery schools after the war; to form a link between the nurseries in Birmingham with opportunities for discussion, debates'...and 'to provide a means for social activities between the nurseries'.⁵⁴

Social activities arranged by the guild included a dance, a debate between a nursery school headmistress and a day nursery matron and a 'Brains Trust' panel consisting of four women from the Canadian Team.⁵⁵

The recruitment of nursery staff and their training resembled a Chinese puzzle in that it was not always possible to get the right people in place at the correct time. For this reason, rather than risk losing possible applicants, women and girls sometimes

⁵³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

⁵⁴ TBL, Lou.Lon 278, *Nursery World*, 'Nursery Nurses in Birmingham' (November 11, 1943), Editor's page.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 'A Real War Job' (January 28, 1943), p. 159; Ibid., 'Nursery Nurses in Birmingham' (November 11, 1943), Editor's page.

worked under supervision until the relevant training session could be arranged.

Unfortunately, when places on training sessions became available, candidates could not always be spared because sufficient individuals were not available to cover their absence.⁵⁶

Wartime nursery staff shortages were a constant difficulty in the city. Birmingham officials demonstrated flexibility and creativity in their staff recruitment, mostly pre-empting central government guidance. The study illustrates that they were prepared to investigate or pursue all possible avenues to find a solution to the problem.

Training nursery staff

The training of nursery staff was not straightforward. Those recruited to work in wartime nurseries came from a variety of backgrounds – including teaching, nursing, working as private nannies – or had no relevant experience at all. Given the varied experience of applicants, many were not sufficiently qualified, and a variety of training schemes needed to be put in place. However keen applicants were to play their part in this provision, if not educated to certain standards they were not able to receive the training. Some women – such as private nannies – considered themselves to be sufficiently qualified to carry out this work and were aggrieved to discover that they required additional training. Blatz and his team carried out an important part in the training of nursery staff in Birmingham. Training sessions at various educational levels were delivered at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre, using the nursery for unobtrusive observation of the children through a discreet screen or within the class. Even though a variety of adult training sessions took

⁵⁶ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Report by Lady Reading on visit to Birmingham (September 13-16, 1943).

place at the training centre, a large proportion of that carried out by the Canadians was for the CCR.

Those targeted to train for the higher roles in nursery work were qualified teachers or nurses who still required additional training before working with under-fives. Their previous training was considered to be 'one-sided' and needed to be supplemented or rounded out. For example, infant teachers required additional knowledge in how to teach under-fives; nursery schoolteachers needed experience in working with the under-two's; and state registered nurses needed to learn how to fulfil the educational needs of pre-school children.⁵⁷ Even those with many years nursery experience in private homes were dismayed to find that without further training they were only eligible to fill the junior posts in wartime nurseries. This was because they were usually untrained and uncertificated, without any additional training other than the experience they had gained in private homes. The official view was that managing large groups of children under five in wartime nurseries required a different approach from that in a private nursery which probably catered for only two or three children from the same family.⁵⁸ Junior posts for wartime nurseries were targeted at school leavers whereas probationers could be recruited from those groups not compelled to join the armed forces or workforce.

Before the war there were usually two types of training available. One strand was provided by the NSDN and was directed towards care in the physical health of children under two; the other strand for Nursery School work covered every aspect of child development from two to five. Nothing existed to cover the exclusive care of

⁵⁷ TBL, Lou.Lon 278, *Nursery World*, 'A Real War Job' (January 28, 1943), p. 159.

⁵⁸ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'College Training' and 'Senior Posts' (December 24, 1942), p. 73.

children from babyhood to five.⁵⁹ Some modification of these training methods was required to provide staff with the appropriate knowledge to work in wartime nurseries and to meet the parameters set by children-to-staff ratios. Before guidance on wartime training was provided by central government, a number of organisations offered training schemes, but without any uniformity in the courses provided. Courses using an approved syllabus were organised by LEAs, and upon completion the student would be eligible to work for the duration of the war at the level appropriate for the training completed.⁶⁰ Blatz and his team created Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre for this purpose on behalf of Birmingham LEA which had gained approval for its syllabus from central officials at the beginning of 1942.⁶¹ To date, no copy of the local syllabus has been found although transcribed copies of those eventually provided on July 17, 1942 by central officials for each level of the CCR course (appendix 11) offer some indication of how the training was structured.⁶²

Nationally, even though training was already taking place on a small scale, it was not until the announcement of the fully funded wartime nursery scheme in May 1941 that the need for child care reservists became urgent. As Birmingham nurseries were opening and consuming staff from June 1940, well before most other areas, local officials had to develop their own training programme while awaiting central guidance. By June 1941 only ten CCR courses had run in London and seven in the

⁵⁹ Stross, B., *Nursery Education* (London, 1941), p. 14.

⁶⁰ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 199-201.

⁶¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (January 21, 1942).

⁶² TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Circular 1599, Childcare Reserve Courses, Syllabus (July 17, 1942).

provinces.⁶³ This did not progress quickly enough to meet the needs of Birmingham nurseries. Again, by pioneering wartime nursery provision to support its industry and female workforce, local officials acted as a testing ground for central policy. Until central government provided guidance the Birmingham LEA, responsible for training nursery staff, was left to its own devices but aimed high. By July 3, 1942, three courses had been held to train childcare personnel. One was directed by Miss F Sutton, formerly a lecturer in infant and nursery school methods at Homerton College, Cambridge.⁶⁴ Another was conducted in the city by Gwendoline (Gwen) Chesters, a lecturer in child psychology at the Tavistock Clinic, London.⁶⁵ It is unclear who conducted the third course although it was not believed to have been Blatz, because his first training session was still in progress at the time. Whether like Blatz, Sutton and Chesters offered their assistance, came by invitation or were guided by central officials is unclear but all were highly regarded in their areas of expertise. Birmingham LEA was also in the unfortunate position of being responsible for providing the training for candidates on behalf of other surrounding regions. Even though Birmingham desperately required these women for its nurseries, upon course

⁶³ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 199-201.

⁶⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/34, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (February 19, 1942).

⁶⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 23, 1942). Before 1939, Chesters was a lecturer in child psychology at the Tavistock Clinic, London. The Nursery School Association appointed her as its first wartime organiser of the CCR, hoping that central government would recognise this as an official post through which Chesters and others in similar roles could influence pre-school childcare during the hostilities and possibly post-war. It is not clear whether this happened but Chesters became Director of the Nursery School Association before being sent in 1944 to the Middle East as Child Care Officer under United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and undertook similar work in devastated Germany. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was founded in 1943 and became part of the United Nations in 1945. The operation was largely closed down by 1947. *Larne Times*, 'Child Psychologist' (April 28, 1949), p. 7; United Nations Archives, 'United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration', Administration History [Online], <http://www.archives.un.org> (Accessed: April 29, 2020).

completion they returned to work in their own region: local effort was not rewarded with additional staff.⁶⁶

Consultation between Birmingham's Public Health Committee and the LEA took place in January 1942 to approve a syllabus for training child care reservists.⁶⁷ The LEA took the necessary steps to advertise the courses.⁶⁸ It also put forward school leavers to train for nursery work – a step that proved helpful early in the process but failed to meet requirements once nursery numbers began to increase.⁶⁹ By the time the syllabus was agreed, the LEA had already received fifty applications to train under the CCR scheme.⁷⁰ Potential applicants did not always meet the standards required to complete the training. In Birmingham, early in the CCR recruitment process, only one hundred were suitable for interview out of the two hundred applications. Of those one hundred interviewed, more were found to be unsuitable, while some lost interest once the nature of the work and the hours involved were explained, leaving only a total of forty to attend the first training session.⁷¹ Those CCR courses already in place in Birmingham were supplemented once Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre was opened by Blatz and his Canadian Team.

Courses for CCR students began at Garrison Lane in early July 1942, a few days after the original intake of children to the nursery which was used for unobtrusive

⁶⁶ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence between Lady Reading and Miss Puxley (April 26, May 1, 1942, March 30, 1943); LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (March 19, 1942).

⁶⁷ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945, Report of the Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee (January 9, 1942).

⁶⁸ Ibid. (January 21, 1942).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. (February 13, 1942).

⁷¹ Ibid. (March 13, 1942).

observation by the students as part of their training. Blatz was provided with a copy of the Board of Education curriculum for child care reservists, which included anatomy, physiology, infectious diseases and the chemistry of nutrition. He considered some of the subjects over-ambitious for the students, describing it as a little like 'casting pearls' and suggested that they be substituted with systematic child psychology, a proposal that was approved. Realising that the students would have to launch their own wartime nurseries in a time of shortages, an exercise in creativity was also added to their curriculum. Their course ensured that students made one piece of nursery-school play equipment from materials found but not purchased.⁷² A British nursery nurse trainee in the 1960s confirmed that this exercise was still included in their curriculum.⁷³ In recognition of the opening of their training scheme, the Canadian Team photographed the first group of trainees in the nursery playground (Figure 8.3).

⁷² TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁷³ *Wood Interviews*, Dr Janet Sullivan (February 15, 2017).



Figure 8.3: First group of Child Care Reserve trainees at Garrison Lane (c. July 1942)⁷⁴

The standard of the education of candidates applying for the various nursery roles raised concerns throughout the period, and the issue became progressively more difficult as the war continued, as fewer women became available for selection. In July 1942 seventy local girls between fourteen and sixteen were working as nursery helpers. From the age of sixteen they became eligible to train for the Certificate of the National Society of Day Nurseries. The level of education reached by most of these girls made it difficult for them to obtain this certificate without extra tuition so an application was made by the local Public Health Committee to the Ministry to fund this additional pedagogy, which was approved.⁷⁵ At Garrison Lane, Blatz recalled his dismay not only at the 'range of chronological age from 19 to 53' of his first group of

⁷⁴ *Wood Private Collection.*

⁷⁵ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 10, 1942).

forty CCR students but also at their 'educational status, indeterminate to secondary school leaving'.⁷⁶ Locally, some candidates fell by the wayside before finishing their training. Reports reached the Marchioness of Reading that the number of CCR candidates not completing their training in Birmingham was far in excess of that in other districts. The fact that more training was taking place in Birmingham than in other areas was the likely explanation for this occurrence, but it was generally considered to be because the course had deviated from that laid down by the Ministry of Health and Board of Education, thus placing greater demands on the students. Lady Reading did not believe this to be the case and attended a lecture which she described as interesting and of a high level but she did not 'feel that it was above the heads of that particular audience'. Reading was keen to establish the employment history of the twelve candidates, which was varied. All were under thirty-five years old; two of them were married with children in nurseries and anxious to work in a nursery; two had lost their own children; one was the wife of a Naval Officer but did not have children; two were ex-nannies; one was an immobile Civil Nursing Reserve, and the remainder were shop workers.⁷⁷

Any opportunity to train reservists was not missed and CCR courses sometimes went ahead even though the number of candidates for each course did not always reach capacity. One at Garrison Lane, for example, continued with twenty-nine students when it was felt that forty could be handled easily.⁷⁸ Blatz and his team provided courses aimed at a variety of educational levels but were dismayed at the aptitude of

⁷⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

⁷⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9 (May 1, 1942). Immobile in this instance referred to someone unable to move out of the area to work due to family commitments.

⁷⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Logbook (May 14, 1943).

some students accepted for training in the CCR.⁷⁹ Educational deficiencies did not deter the students' eagerness, leading Blatz to pronounce 'what the group lacked perhaps in formal training and chic they made up in zeal, interest and appreciation'.⁸⁰ Concentrated courses of three weeks' to one month's duration were held regularly to train CCR personnel.⁸¹ Blatz felt that the CCR curriculum provided far too little training and, in collaboration with his team, he produced *Understanding the Young Child* in 1943, which he hoped would serve as a further guide for the students.⁸² Given that the ages of women in the CCR ranged from nineteen to fifty-three and their education was also varied, it is easy to understand Blatz's concerns.⁸³ These women were usually directed towards the unqualified roles but if they displayed aptitude, they could return to Garrison Lane to complete a warden's course after achieving six months' nursery experience.⁸⁴

Applications could be received from candidates nationwide, but billeting was a problem in Birmingham and so these external applicants could not always be considered.⁸⁵ Nonetheless some women did come to the city from farther afield to carry out training.⁸⁶ Blatz's reputation generated interest in terms of applications to

⁷⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁸⁰ Ibid. Known for his wit, Blatz's use of 'chic' probably referred to the student's lack of worldly experience, fashion and culture.

⁸¹ *Evening Dispatch*, 'Canadian Nurses' Farewell Party' (June 28, 1944), p. 3; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/36, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, Memorandum by the Chief Education Officer (March 23, 1944). For details of suggested staffing structures required to manage wartime nurseries, see appendix 12.

⁸² Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. vii – xi.

⁸³ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁸⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 3 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 15-18.

⁸⁵ 'Billet' was a term used for assigned temporary accommodation in a private home where workers coming to the city lived for the duration of the war; standards varied greatly.

⁸⁶ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Garrison Lane Visitor books 1 and 2.

attend his courses and introduced these women to new ways of teaching children.⁸⁷ His courses consisted of a combination of lectures and observation of the children in the nursery, sometimes discreetly through a one-way screen that Blatz had installed.⁸⁸ Few images of nursery trainees exist, and where they do, most focus on children in the nursery. Images in the lecture room setting, such as Figure 8.4 showing Dorothy Millichamp during one of her training sessions at Garrison Lane, are a rarity.

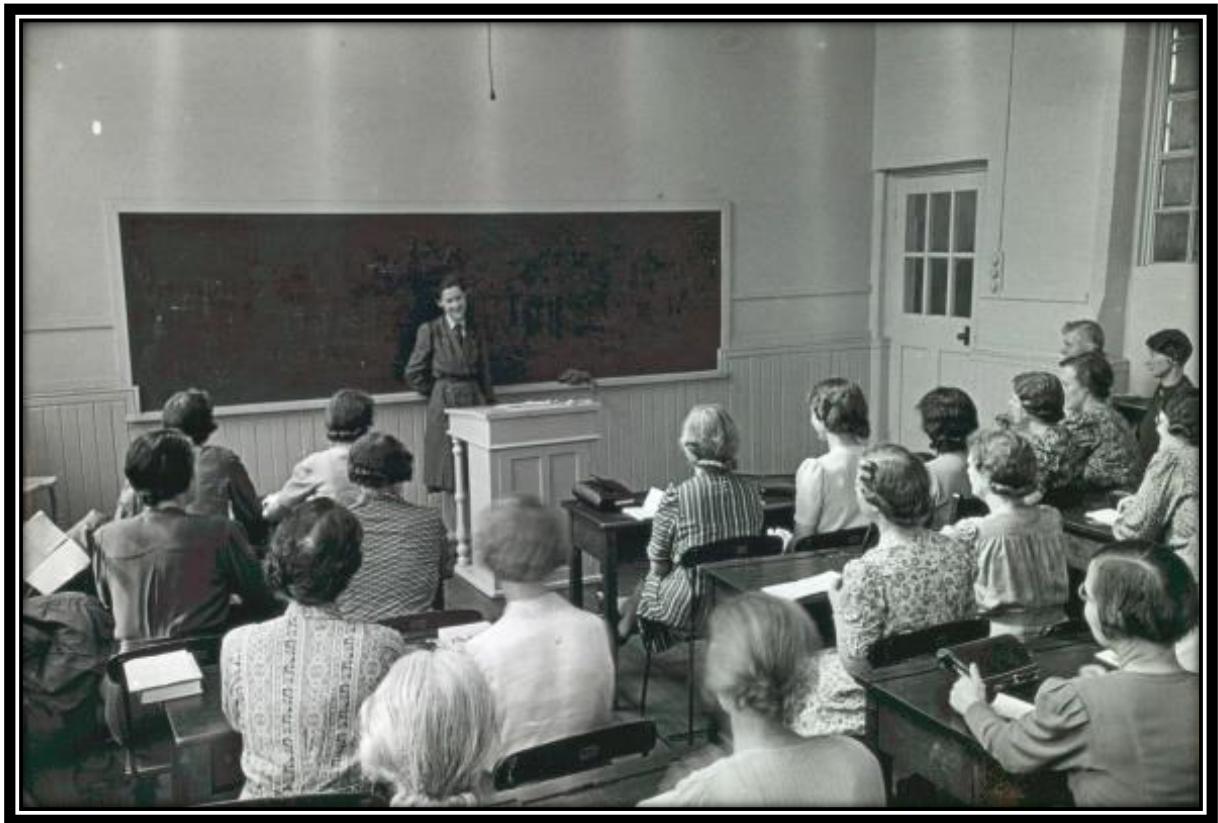


Figure 8.4: A group of Garrison Lane students being taught by Canadian Dorothy Millichamp (c. July 1942)⁸⁹

⁸⁷ CRL, MS806/1, Letters from Dorothy Walker to Stanley Chamberlain (1943).

⁸⁸ A one-way screen was installed so that the public could view the Dionne Quintuplets when outside their nursery at play; as they grew older, they realised that they were being watched. Whether the children at Garrison Lane had a similar realisation is unclear but some of the students used the screen to watch special visitors as they were shown around the nursery. Ibid. (July 22, 1943).

⁸⁹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31.

Blatz's training insisted on serenity; the adherence to a daily routine; a quiet and pleasant atmosphere at meals; creating an atmosphere conducive to sleep; arranging the playroom to reduce adult interference; applying a business-like routine in the washroom; the elimination of tender sweet sentiment as a substitute for discipline; and finally the total elimination of corporal punishment. These approaches created the results his students witnessed in the nursery: they appreciated the end result and told Blatz. He had made his own observations about English nursery school training, considering it was 'heavily loaded with sentiment, often nauseating'. Blatz had witnessed one head teacher talking to children in a patronising high-pitched voice: 'who's going to be my little gnome and who's going to be my little spider and who is going to be my little aspidistra?'⁹⁰ Understanding the local dialect was originally a problem for the Canadians and occasionally students were perplexed by their reaction to the children's remarks. Early in the project if the team were unable to understand the children they responded yes, then watched to see what the child did. While being observed by students, Canadian Team member Margaret Fletcher did this with one child who wandered off but returned, leading one student to ask if vulgarisms were permitted. The child had said 'Please, teacher, can I piddle?' Blatz recalled how Fletcher had no alternative but to pass the incident off, stating how in a new environment, old associations were permitted for a few times at least.⁹¹

⁹⁰ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

⁹¹ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 1 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 5-11.

Nationally, during the hostilities, three hundred and ninety-nine CCR courses were held, training a total of nine thousand, nine hundred and fifty-four students.⁹² Statistics relating to the number of CCR students trained at Garrison Lane differ. Education Committee minutes record attendees on each course as numbering between thirty-five and forty, with a total of three hundred and seventy-three students trained there, with two hundred and three who received additional training to become wardens.⁹³ Conversely, a local newspaper records Alison Mack of the Canadian Team advising that from the opening of the centre in July 1942, eight hundred and thirty-eight students had been trained.⁹⁴ These statistical discrepancies are probably due to the inclusion of different groups from the variety of training sessions which took place over the two years. The success of the CCR training sessions at Garrison Lane should not be judged by numbers alone. Through these students, Blatz's theories and his team's expertise probably percolated into future elementary education. CCR qualifications did not always translate into nursery work at the close of hostilities, but this training provided a foundation for women interested in this type of work to build upon. Even if the experience was not used in the workplace, Florence Horsbrugh MP (1889-1969), parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Health, considered nursery work to be an excellent preparation for motherhood.⁹⁵

In addition to the CCR training, courses carried out by the National Society of Children's Nurseries (NSCN), previously the National Society of Day Nurseries

⁹² TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Below School Age: The Under-Fives (December 7, 1946).

⁹³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/36, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (1944).

⁹⁴ *Birmingham Post*, 'Regional Production Boards' (July 1, 1942), p. 3.

⁹⁵ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Post-war' and 'Uniform or badge' (October 29, 1942), p. 891. While in this wartime post, Florence Horsbrugh was involved in schemes to evacuate children and to reform the health services. Pugh, M., 'Horsbrugh, Florence Gertrude, Baroness Horsbrugh' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Online], <http://www.oxforddnb.com> (Accessed: September 20, 2018).

(NSDN), continued and increased during the war.⁹⁶ By 1939, the Society only required 'one technical advisor to visit nurseries for the purpose of approval and of supervising the training given to nursery nurses'; by 1944 a whole team was required for this work.⁹⁷ Concern was raised by Lady Reading at the failure rate of some trainees examined by the NSCN in September 1943. Considering the desperate nursery staff shortages, she argued that examiners were being a little 'over-zealous'. Of twenty-five probationers examined by this organisation, only ten had passed. The failure of one candidate was challenged but the NSCN declined to reverse its decision. This Birmingham student had failed needlework even though her tutors considered her one of their best at this skill.⁹⁸ By 1944 over 1,300 nurseries were affiliated to the Society; the number of students awarded the Nursery Nurses' Diploma increased until in 1945 more than 1,600 had passed this examination.⁹⁹

Courses for nurses who were eligible for positions as matrons and sisters in wartime nurseries were held in Birmingham. They were arranged by the National Society of Children's Nurseries in conjunction with the Royal College of Nursing and the Association of Sick Children's Hospital Nurses, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. Ten such courses had been held by February 1943 and were free to nurses on the General and Sick Children's State Register if they intended to take up wartime nursery work. They consisted of two weeks of lectures and observational visits plus an optional week of practical experience which dealt with nursery management and

⁹⁶ LSE Library, BAECE 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, Biographical history.

⁹⁷ MRC, MSS.292/147/63, Day Nurseries 1941-57, Programme for the Golden Jubilee Conference of the National Society of Children's Nurseries, 30th May-1st June 1956.

⁹⁸ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Lady Reading (September 21, 1943).

⁹⁹ MRC, MSS.292/147/63, Day Nurseries 1941-57, Programme for the Golden Jubilee Conference of the National Society of Children's Nurseries, 30th May-1st June 1956.

the care of the healthy child.¹⁰⁰ Even though this was a useful opportunity for nurses to train and gain experience in a different field, it took staff away from other important work.

Overall, potential nursery staff applicants did not always meet the standards required to complete the training, a situation which became more difficult as the war progressed and fewer women became available for selection. Nevertheless, those who met the standards received a foundation for further training post-war for this type of work and prepared them for motherhood.

Nursery staff retention

This chapter considers the staffing, recruiting and training of wartime nursery staff, but retaining these staff was equally difficult. Partly this was because of low pay, and women could earn more in factories, but there were other reasons. There was a substantial leakage of CCRs who had taken the Senior Course. The Board of Education, the body responsible for training the CCRs, considered that some candidates had taken the course with ulterior motives, without any intention of working in the nurseries. However, what was gained from doing this is unclear. Others did not fully appreciate the conditions of the work and gave up after a short trial.¹⁰¹ For some who came from outside the area, Birmingham was a bewildering place, particularly if their previous home was a small village. Working hours were extremely long, sometimes six days a week, with little time or opportunity to make friends, leaving incomers prone to homesickness. Ministry of Labour officials in

¹⁰⁰ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Birmingham Students' (December 31, 1942), p. 89.

¹⁰¹ TNA, ED135/3, Board of Education, Memo to Inspectors of Nursery Schools No 130(E) (February 19, 1943).

Birmingham did not attempt as a general policy to direct women into nursery work, but great efforts were made to persuade them to take it up, and to dissuade them from leaving, although any form of obstruction would probably be counterproductive.¹⁰² One case was recorded where a local labour exchange officer pleaded successfully with a day nursery helper who already had 'one foot on the' train home to Wales.¹⁰³ Women registering to work in wartime nurseries were not asked to move to other war-work.¹⁰⁴ However, some women were enticed by the new opportunities available to them, although if they wished to move, permission was required. Birmingham authorities realised that it was pointless forcing women to stay once they had decided to leave, but it is unclear whether this attitude was typical nationwide. An unusual application was received from one highly trained assistant matron at a Birmingham wartime day nursery to be allowed 'to go to India for work at the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes, Kalimpong, Bengal'. As of June 1943, this home – 'founded in 1900 for the benefit of children of British descent in India' – had five hundred and thirty-seven residents; the requested permission was granted.¹⁰⁵ Similar decisions were made in other areas, also under the administration of Civil Defence Region 9, but whether these were regional decisions or merely indicative of a common-sense approach is unclear. The most satisfactory warden in the 'Night Shift' nurseries in the Potteries was a Norland-trained nursery nurse who had completed Blatz's three-week course in Birmingham. Her excellent work in two of

¹⁰² TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (sic) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 26.

¹⁰³ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries, Ministry of Labour and the women workers child, p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ TBL, Lou.Lon 350, *Nursery World*, 'Helping with children' (November 20, 1941), p. 1017.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Correspondence from Miss Bennett, Ministry of Labour and National Service to Miss I V Humphries, Ministry of Health (June 2, 1943).

their nurseries was praised but unfortunately, she decided to join the armed forces and it was felt that 'it would be unwise for us to try to keep her against her will'.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes women could not deal with the working conditions: one thirty-six-year-old CCR completed her training before being assigned to a nursery in a poor area of Birmingham. She liked the children but within three days found that her hair was infested with lice, and she submitted her notice. Another woman was unhappy at the way reservists in one unidentified nursery were treated, suggesting that they were used like 'chars', adding she had 'never known such snobbish treatment by qualified nursery staff'.¹⁰⁷ In reality, nursery work was financially unattractive to suitable women, and this was undoubtedly a major deterrent to staying in the job.¹⁰⁸

Because wartime childcare provision evolved, it sometimes resulted in inequities. Birmingham officials could not afford to lose nursery staff due to these inequities and attempted to resolve them. For example, the daily opening hours of nursery schools or classes were extended: from 1942 they opened on six rather than five days a week and did not close for school holidays.¹⁰⁹ This increased teachers' working hours for the same pre-war wages. Birmingham officials sought approval from the Education Board to pay overtime, but the request was denied. A local arrangement was reached whereby teachers volunteering to work these extra hours were allowed

¹⁰⁶ TNA, MH55/1704, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries Established by News Chronicle, Report from Miss Harley to Birmingham Council (July 27, 1943). Five nurseries were set up in the potteries mostly funded by Save the Children Federation of the United States in an experimental project. The project managed by *The News Chronicle*, a publication not run on ordinary commercial lines but governed by a trust deed originated by a member of the Cadbury family. Ibid., Correspondence from Mr Boucher to Mr Riddle (July 27, 1944).

¹⁰⁷ CRL, MS806/1, Letters from Dorothy Walker to Stanley Chamberlain (1942, 1943).

¹⁰⁸ TBL, YD.2009.b.1458, The London Women's Parliament, *You can get a War-time Nursery in your District* (1944), pp. 11-13.

¹⁰⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (September 17, 1942).

to take time off to compensate.¹¹⁰ Discrepancies arose between the conditions of service of junior assistants employed by the LEA and those carrying out the same role in the CCR, managed by the Public Health Committee. Junior Assistants employed by the LEA were allowed the full elementary school holidays whereas those under Public Health Committee control received one week's holiday plus bank holidays. Consequently, the scale of salary adopted by the LEA was lower than that under the Public Health Committee. This discrepancy was overcome by reducing the holiday entitlement of those employed by the LEA while increasing their salary to the same level as the Junior Assistants in the CCR to compensate.¹¹¹ While creativity and flexibility probably helped to placate and retain Birmingham nursery staff to a certain degree, the Canadian Team benefitted from status-related concessions that were not enjoyed by others. The Canadian women found living in Birmingham particularly expensive and difficult to manage on the salary paid by the LEA. Sick pay was not available to child care reservists when ill and this also applied to the Canadian women under their temporary contract, creating particular hardship for one team member following a long bout of illness. Upon appeal, the Elementary Education sub-committee agreed that those serving in Birmingham as part of the Canadian group should be given special consideration in future when unable to work due to illness.¹¹² The activities of the Canadian Team while in Britain probably differed greatly from other LEA nursery employees as did their salary. In 1941, guidance from central government on the level of nursery staff pay ranged from £40

¹¹⁰ Ibid. (October 22, 1942).

¹¹¹ Ibid. (February 18, 1943).

¹¹² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/35, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes (November 18, 1943).

for Probationers to £220 for a Matron.¹¹³ By April 1944, Eleanor Hamilton's annual salary was £268 and some of this was spent exploring places of interest around the country, attending the theatre and enjoying shopping trips to London where she would sometimes stay at the Park Lane Hotel. Most unusually for a teacher, she also corresponded with Princess Juliana of the Netherlands.¹¹⁴

Uniforms serve a psychological and social purpose. People gain a sense of identity amongst those with whom they share a uniform, which manifests itself as a sense of pride amongst peers and others they come into contact with whilst wearing it.

Uniforms, according to Woodward, can carry personal and emotional meanings, facilitating 'interpersonal interactions and assist a person to act upon him or herself'.¹¹⁵ Wearing certain clothing for example 'may make a person feel empowered by altering their self-perception' and 'can assist in forming or negating interpersonal and group attachments, mediating the formation of self-identity and esteem, and integrating and differentiating social groups, classes or tribes'.¹¹⁶

Questions arose as to why nursery work was not worthy of a recognised uniform or badge.¹¹⁷ Matrons received an initial uniform allowance of ten pounds with an annual five pounds towards replacements. After relinquishing coupons, other nursing members of staff received six overalls.¹¹⁸ It is unclear whether similar support was available to other nursery staff. Even if it was, overalls were used within the confines of the nursery and did little in terms of enhancing the workers' prestige. At the time,

¹¹³ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Memorandum 249-III A (England), Ministry of Health enclosure to Circular 2435 and Board of Education Circular 1558, War-time Nurseries (July, 1941).

¹¹⁴ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Eleanor Hamilton Scrapbooks 1 and 2.

¹¹⁵ Woodward, I., *Understanding Material Culture* (London, 2007), p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Readers Letters' (August 27, 1942), p. 707.

¹¹⁸ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Ministry of Health, Provision of day nurseries for children of munition workers, Helping with children is a real war job (May, 1942).

regardless of class or gender, anything outwardly displaying an individual's wartime contribution and status was important for morale. Not only did a uniform reflect a person's wartime status but it was also of practical help. The provision of a uniform saved the wear and tear on personal clothing while conserving coupons for other use. Even a badge easily identified those carrying out important war-work and could move the wearer forward in queues, for example, at crowded bus stops.¹¹⁹ The women in the Canadian Team were extremely proud of their Canadian Children's Service uniforms (Figure 8.5) which, apart from being distinctive, sometimes secured special rates for hotel rooms when they visited other parts of the country.¹²⁰ Because the Canadian Team's uniform did not originally include a tie, upon their arrival Mrs Massey (wife of the Canadian High Commissioner), went to great lengths for each of them to have one from Harrods.¹²¹ At that time, the colour and style of a uniform influenced many people's decisions about where they served. It is not clear whether a uniform or badge was eventually provided to wartime nursery staff, but *Nursery World* noted that both were under consideration by central officials.¹²²

¹¹⁹ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Readers Letters' (August 27, 1942), p. 707.

¹²⁰ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Eleanor Hamilton Scrapbooks 1 and 2.

¹²¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Letter 1 from William Blatz to Dr Clarence Hincks (July 26, 1942).

¹²² TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Post-war' and 'Uniform or badge' (October 29, 1942), p. 891.

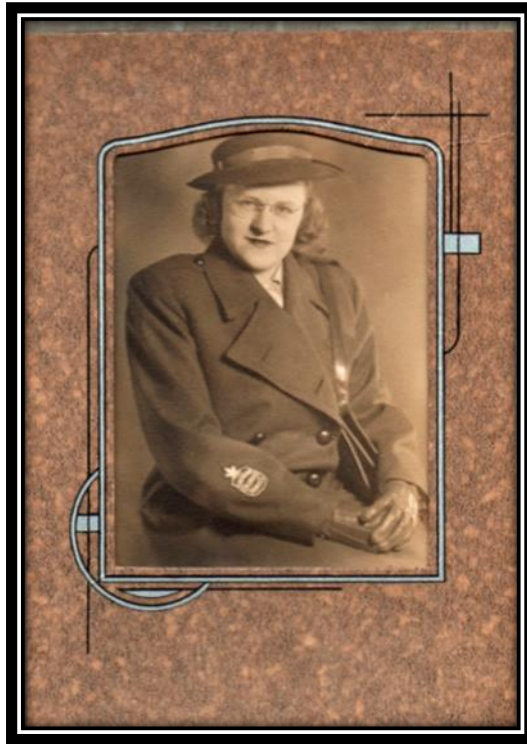


Figure 8.5: Mary J Wright, Canadian Children's Service (c. June 1942) ¹²³

Once attracted, retaining those women suitable to work in wartime nurseries was important to their success. Birmingham officials attempted to address staff grievances however it was not always within their control. For instance, they could not fully address the issues of higher wages, home sickness, head lice infestations or the absence of a uniform which became more than a practicality to the wearer but offered them a sense of identity, togetherness, unity, and pride.

The contribution of pre-school childcare to the war effort

It is difficult to assess the cost-effectiveness of nurseries for the war effort. Early in the war, doubts were raised in non-official circles about the economic value of nursery workers compared with the womanpower released for wartime factories and

¹²³ *Wood Private Collection.*

the public funding nurseries would cost. In December 1940, educationalist, Lady Simon of Wythenshawe estimated that one full-time nursery worker released 2.2 mothers for factory work.¹²⁴ Staffing ratios were high, particularly for the under-tuos. Sheila Ferguson and Hilde Fitzgerald in their history suggested that if nurseries had been restricted to cater for the two- to five-year-olds, the number of nurseries and staff required could have been reduced.¹²⁵ Central officials did not stop to consider whether labour gains might have been more rewarding by adopting that approach. Ministry of Health guidance suggested one member of staff to every five children attending, but this was found to be insufficient in Birmingham, where nurseries opened from 7 am to 8 pm to cover the long hours worked and the wide variety of starting and finishing times of mothers. The authorities attempted to reduce nursery hours but due to the large number of small factories in the city, whose employees worked irregular hours, this proved impossible. Consequently, overlapping shifts were worked by nursery staff with a ratio of one adult to every four children.¹²⁶

At the end of hostilities in 1945, the Ministry of Health was heavily criticised by the Public Accounts Committee for the heavy cost of wartime nursery provision in the Midlands region. The committee believed there was only a small net gain in women carrying out war-work opposed to the number of nursery staff required to care for their children.¹²⁷ Because of the complexity of the whole wartime nursery scheme, particularly that provided in Birmingham, it was extremely difficult to determine accurate figures for the number of nursery staff required against the mothers

¹²⁴ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), pp. 205-206, 208.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹²⁶ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries, p. 26.

¹²⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9.

released for war-work. However, in June 1945, the local Public Health Department using the Birmingham staff ratio of one-to-four, calculated that eight hundred and sixty-eight members of staff were required for the three thousand, four hundred and seventy-two children attending, giving a theoretical 'net' release of two thousand, two hundred and seventy-five mothers, or 3.6 for every nursery staff member. Although all work carried out during the hostilities was important, not all of these women worked in industry, which had been the original objective. This calculation does not provide a realistic picture from a labour power perspective because three hundred and fifty-nine of these women worked part-time, and so should only be considered to equate to half that number in terms of full-time work.¹²⁸ These statistics do not include any provision made by the LEA, voluntary and industrial organisations or residential nurseries. However, this exercise does show that in addition to the positive benefits of nurseries discussed in other chapters, such as improved child health and development, there was probably some net gain to the female workforce, even if not on a large scale.

Unlike nursery staff, the question of the economic value of childminders (as discussed in Chapter 4) does not arise. One minder caring for three children could potentially make a maximum contribution of three full-time workers to war production. Set against this, people were required to administer the scheme, although some personnel were already in place for other management purposes, such as for welfare centres. Winifred Cavenagh, the Ministry of Labour's Chief Welfare Officer in Birmingham, considered that the additional staff required to accomplish the work

¹²⁸ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 29.

created by the scheme 'was an insignificant fraction of the mothers involved'.¹²⁹ She was convinced that there were 'serious grounds for believing that the amount of minding would have been the same, had there been no scheme at all'.¹³⁰ Overall, as with nursery provision, it seems likely that minding made a contribution to the woman-power problem, although the official minding schemes were probably responsible for only a small fraction of the workforce.

Conclusion

This chapter considers nursery nursing in Birmingham between 1939 and 1945 by asking two questions. Firstly, where did this workforce come from and to what extent did the political, economic, demographic and cultural elements stimulate or impede its recruitment? Secondly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its recruitment, training and retention and were there any constraints? Birmingham industry's early demand to increase its workforce in order to meet war contracts had dictated the need for wartime pre-school nursery provision. The government's reluctance to recognise that pre-school childcare was required in the workplace continued to create difficulties locally. From the beginning of the Second World War, trained nursery staff were few and personnel shortages remained a constant stumbling block throughout the hostilities. Even the creation of the CCR did not alleviate the problem. Slow official guidance made staff recruitment and training confusing. Nurseries could only be as good as the staff employed in them. Birmingham officials invited and accepted offers from experts to help with the process, as reflected in the city's early and extensive pre-school nursery provision.

¹²⁹ Cavenagh, W. E., 'The Birmingham Children's Home Service and the British National Child-minding Scheme', *Social Services Review* (March 1, 1951), volume 25, issue 1, pp. 501-508.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Experts like Blatz found it exciting to experiment in previously unexplored areas of child psychology for which the war provided an opportunity. Birmingham LEA was actively encouraging experts such as Blatz and his team to carry out additional training in the knowledge that its staff would benefit for the future. Local authorities challenged central official guidance, sometimes successfully, at other times not. Birmingham tried to deal with nursery workers in an ethical way by resolving any inequities brought about by the rapid increase in wartime nursery workers. Garrison Lane survived as a nursery training centre after the war and as a building continues to exist in the twenty-first century, a physical record of a pioneering educational experiment.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Birmingham was one of the epicentres of educational thinking in a pioneering educational experiment in pre-school childcare, where the local authority exhibited both creativity and experimentation. Research for this thesis carried the narrative beyond its Birmingham base, connecting with London and Canada. In particular it considers Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare by answering four key questions. Firstly, why was there a need or demand for pre-school childcare in Birmingham during the Second World War? Secondly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision before the war, and what constraints affected its development? Thirdly, to what extent was Birmingham innovatory in its pre-school childcare provision during the war, and what constraints affected its development? Finally, to what extent and in what ways did Birmingham's pre-school childcare system secure the buildings and internal features and shape the educational experiences and staffing, it needed to operate effectively?

This thesis adds to the field of the history of early years education, a largely neglected area of academic study though there exist general texts by Whitbread, Blackstone, Riley and Summerfield. It approaches the subject from a previously unexplored aspect of Birmingham's Second World War history: pre-school childcare provision. The author accessed much new material, and particularly an unexplored collection of Canadian records. It moves beyond some of the general observation of existing secondary sources and adds to our knowledge of the realities of pre-school

childcare in a particular place at a particular time. The thesis also builds on scholarship which has sought to interpret women's contribution during the Second World War. In so doing it contributes not only to women's and Birmingham's history but also to the histories of education, including the importance of buildings and internal spaces in which childcare took place. The Conclusion to the thesis outlines the answers to the four key questions, by examining the findings of individual chapters before highlighting suggestions for further research.

Chapter findings

The study investigates the effect the Second World War had on Birmingham's pre-school childcare by describing, interpreting and evaluating the local situation through seven chapters. Chapter 2 addresses the first key question. It reveals how Birmingham industry experienced wartime labour shortages earlier than most areas. This dictated how, a need developed for mothers of pre-school children to join the workforce. At that time the only option arranged by central government for pre-school children was for their evacuation outside the city, in which case it was usual for them to be accompanied by their mothers. However, if this happened in Birmingham, the number of experienced local workers would be reduced. Even though local officials recognised this problem and wanted to support wartime industry and mothers by providing nurseries, central government failed to provide policies and finance. Gaps existed in the local industrial workforce while mothers who wanted to work lacked pre-school childcare that would enable them to fill these gaps. Sympathetic to the situation, the local authorities were left to provide childcare without appropriate government backing, guidance or funding. Full financial support

for wartime nurseries was eventually offered in May 1941 when official guidance began to filter through.¹ However, by that time delays had greatly impeded the rate of wartime nursery growth in Birmingham. Central government was reluctant to devolve power to the local authorities during the hostilities.² It claimed to understand the bigger picture and wanted to retain control nationally but this in turn created problems locally. Birmingham's local authority considered that it understood the requirements of its population better than anyone and felt restricted by its lack of power. Local difficulties were often ignored by central officials who considered them as probably 'an unfortunate small local difficulty' which would not be experienced elsewhere.³ This reluctance to devolve central power locally or to offer guidance often placed Birmingham authorities in a position where they had to pre-empt or circumnavigate official guidance.

Chapter 3 addresses the second key question. Due to Birmingham's industrial nature, women traditionally worked outside of the home, whilst care for their pre-school child usually came in the form of private arrangements with family, friends or neighbours. Despite these individual and family arrangements, by 1939 Birmingham had a distinctive pre-school education system based on philanthropic effort and a progressive local government. Birmingham became a key player in the pre-school childcare movement. The local Free Kindergarten movement offered provision to the children of the working classes, and experimentation in nursery school architecture enticed experts to the city. When the hostilities dictated that pre-school childcare

¹ Creech Jones, V. W., *Nurseries and Nursery Schools: A Study in War-time Experiments* (London, 1945), pp. 6-7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ TNA, HLG7/82, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Evacuation Region 9, Senior Officers Report, Correspondence between W H Howes and H Beckwith, Test evacuation rehearsal (August 29, 1939).

should increase, this early work in Birmingham established the framework upon which the Second World War provision was built. The chapter indicates why and how Birmingham was able to implement an innovative programme of pre-school childcare.

As Birmingham industry experienced wartime labour shortages earlier than most areas, the creation of pre-school childcare had to pre-empt official guidance and funding. Chapter 4 addresses key question three which investigates the administration of this service, revealing the difficulties and tensions between the various organisations keen to influence this provision. Creativity was displayed locally in order to speed up the process, for example, by using welfare centres which were relatively easy to convert into schools. In its pioneering role, Birmingham was often watched by others while they tackled the many issues created by increasing pre-school childcare on such a large scale under wartime conditions. Local officials often challenged the government if they considered projects unworkable locally – the childminding scheme, for example. A new and expanding service of pre-school childcare was developed in Birmingham under the emergency conditions created by war, and this in turn influenced national central guidance. While doing so, they created a culture in Birmingham within which leading Canadian child psychologist Dr William Blatz and his team's experiment would fit. Birmingham's pioneering activities led to the establishment of the largest number of wartime nurseries by any local

authority outside the London County Council and the creation of a local pre-school childminding scheme.⁴

Chapters 5 and 6 continue to address key question three. They explore how experts came to the city encouraged by the opportunities this large increase in childcare offered for study. An innovative approach to local provision rendered Birmingham suitable for William Blatz's experiment. Blatz, a leading Canadian child psychologist, was internationally well-known for managing the early education of the Dionne Quintuplets in the 1930s.⁵ Believing that he could help protect the mental health of pre-school children during the hostilities, Blatz came with a small group of Canadian women who acted like missionaries bringing new ideas to Birmingham. Chapter 5 examines Blatz's practice within an evolving tradition of child psychology in Canada, the individuals within the Canadian team, and shows why Birmingham was chosen as a suitable site for their experiment. The project at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre played a significant part in the history of local wartime pre-school childcare. The project was three-fold: it offered nursery places for local children, training for child care reservists and an opportunity for the team to study the children of the working classes.

The next chapter, Chapter 6 investigates how the team adapted and developed its approach within a working-class area of Birmingham and how its work may have influenced local pre-school childcare and post-war elementary education. Those children attending the nursery were not only observed by the Canadian Team but were part of the training programme for the Child Care Reserve students and many

⁴ Cavenagh, W. E., 'Day Nurseries and the Man-power Problem', *The British Medical Journal* (June 19, 1948), pp. 1184-1185.

⁵ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets* (London, 1939).

others. Even though the project had the potential for disaster due to the cultural differences and the contextual circumstances in which it was carried out, it seems to have been successful. While the team managed to build bridges and spread its missionary pre-school child development message, class and cultural differences could not be totally overcome. Blatz's prominence enabled the Canadians to influence nursery provision locally and nationally, and the experience gained working in Birmingham was in turn shared in Canada. Canadian Team member Mary Wright believed that 'Blatz's favourite terms are prominent' in Lillian Weber's study of a group of English nursery and infant schools in London, Birmingham and Bristol; and that the 1967 Plowden Report 'had much in common with the type of education he promoted'.⁶ Mary Salter Ainsworth's connection with Blatz and Bowlby argues that their theories of attachment evolved from Blatz's theory of security. Similarly, team member Dorothy Millichamp claimed that the wartime nursery provision she created in Toronto upon her return was based on the knowledge gained at Garrison Lane Nursery.⁷ At a time when many were becoming war-tired, this Canadian presence provided a stimulus to the national and local nursery school movement, and to the working-class community in which they operated.

Chapter 7 addresses key question four on buildings and staffing by exploring early nursery architecture; the reality of implementing central guidance in their provision; life within the nurseries, the environment they served, and the health of those children attending. It shows how Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare often

⁶ Wright, M. J., 'Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the Teachings of W. E. Blatz', in: Prochner, L. and Howe, N. (eds.), *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past, Present and Future* (Vancouver, 2000), pp. 96-114.

⁷ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

went beyond the boundaries of simply caring for the children as local officials grasped opportunities to improve the lives of staff working in these establishments. Those with key roles in the city before the war and during the hostilities were knowledgeable of their local community and, understood what would work in their area. Appointed by Birmingham LEA, local architect, William Benslyn, was creative in creating and adapting buildings for wartime nurseries influenced by the modernist Bauhaus movement.⁸ Birmingham LEA allowed Benslyn the freedom to design the local authority's first purpose-built nursery school, opened at the beginning of the war.⁹ Benslyn also managed the alterations suggested by Blatz to Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre. While Benslyn and Blatz approached nursery provision from different perspectives, both were eager to improve the lives of local working-class children. Details of the nurseries opened in the city were collated and a GIS map was created, which revealed the scale of the task which local officials had overcome. As far as Birmingham was concerned, any worries about the detrimental effect on the health of those children attending wartime nurseries were unfounded. Local women doctors and school nurses played an important role in the wartime nursery movement as previously unavailable opportunities were taken to improve the health of the pre-school child. Generally, there was a marked improvement in the health of local children.¹⁰ The local childminding scheme contributed in aiding the

⁸ Grosvenor, I., 'The Art of Seeing: Promoting Design in Education in 1930s England', *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* (August, 2005), volume 41, issues 4 and 5, pp. 507-534.

⁹ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (September 5, 1940), volume 92, issue 2381, 'Nursery School Birmingham', pp. 189-191 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 25, 2018).

¹⁰ McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part I, *The British Medical Journal* (May 3, 1947), pp. 591-594, McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part II, *The British Medical Journal* (May 10, 1947), pp. 631-634; Martin, W. J., 'The Health of Children in Wartime Day Nurseries', *ibid.* (August 17, 1946), pp. 217-221.

welfare of the pre-school child as childminders became regulated.¹¹ Medical attention focused on improving not only the child's health but also that of nursery staff by offering them tuberculosis screening.¹² Wartime nurseries did not improve the health of everyone connected with them. Some newcomers to the city, not used to living and working in an industrial environment, experienced detrimental health issues.¹³ Study of the relationship between nurseries and their local community also contradicts the wartime myth that everyone worked together during the hostilities. Pilfering, vandalism and organised theft were problems. This criminality had a serious impact on local wartime nursery provision.¹⁴

Chapter 8 addresses key question four. It establishes how the Birmingham nursery workforce was created between 1939 and 1945 from an administrative and social perspective by addressing three themes: recruitment, training and retention. It considers where this workforce came from and to what extent the political, economic, demographic and cultural elements stimulated or impeded their recruitment. Secondly, it interrogates to what extent Birmingham was innovatory in its recruitment, training and retention and whether there were any constraints. It looks at how a large trained nursery workforce was created locally from the already depleted national labour resources. Even the creation of the Child Care Reserve (CCR) failed to alleviate the problem. The creation of a CCR determined that training schemes

¹¹ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', pp. 11-12.

¹² Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1945.

¹³ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 18, 1943); TBL, C880/06/01, Sound and Moving Image Collection, Women Conscientious Objectors, Interview with Florence Salway (July 25, 1997).

¹⁴ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 15, 1942, June 28, July 23, and December 15, 1943, April 19 and October 13, 1944).

should be established. Locally, officials went beyond training CCR students as additional training sessions were arranged for other potential beneficiaries. The LEA invited and welcomed the best trainers. Birmingham LEA was actively encouraging experts such as Blatz and his team to carry out additional training in the knowledge that its staff would derive benefit for the future. Sessions in child development were given to supplement the knowledge of teaching and nursing staff.¹⁵ Nursery work was considered good preparation for motherhood.¹⁶ As potential mothers, schoolgirls were encouraged to visit wartime nurseries.¹⁷ Previously, Chapter 6 shows how the Canadians organised parent sessions in child development at Garrison Lane Nursery as they had in Toronto.¹⁸ This vision of training local people in pre-school child development and care was not particularly new. Julia Lloyd records how frequent visits were made to Greet, not only by college students but also by local and national education officials, to experience the work carried out there.¹⁹ Garrison Lane survived as a Nursery Training Centre after the war.

The study in Chapter 8 continues by raising the nature of interaction between people of different social classes, attempting to reveal the student's, nursery worker's and trainer's perspectives, which are not easily represented. It also offers an insight into how this interaction had certain effects. Some of the women applying for CCR training had experienced a limited formal education, but Blatz and his team played a

¹⁵ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

¹⁶ TBL, Lou.Lon 252, *Nursery World*, 'Post-war' and 'Uniform or badge' (October 29, 1942), p. 891.

¹⁷ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Garrison Lane Visitor books 1 and 2.

¹⁸ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), p. 261.

¹⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, L./48/31;248948, Birmingham Nursery School Movement, 'Annals of the Birmingham Nursery Schools Association', Minutes of meeting Birmingham Nursery Schools' Association (February 24, 1919).

significant role in training not only CCR students, but others who might benefit from understanding child development.²⁰ The prospect of carrying out a course for teaching and nursing staff excited Blatz. He described it as 'the first attempt at reconciling Health and Education'.²¹ Inequities arose because of the unstructured way in which wartime pre-school childcare was created; these had to be smoothed out locally so as to avoid the risk of losing staff.²² Local officials worked hard to attract, train and retain wartime nursery staff by operating in a fair and ethical way, sometimes bypassing central guidance.²³

This thesis argues that the council and providers of pre-school childcare in Birmingham were creative and committed innovators before and during the Second World War. Local pre-school childcare often went beyond the boundaries of simply caring for children as local officials aimed to improve the lives of staff and families of those using these establishments. Birmingham had a progressive perspective, which Blatz and his team personified - that it was possible to make lives better by intervention. The combination of Birmingham's philanthropic elite, progressive council officials and Blatz and his team played a significant part in the history of local, national and Canadian wartime pre-school childcare, which extended beyond the time of the hostilities.

²⁰ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (February 16, July 10, 1942).

²¹ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19, October, 1942, Letter No 2 from Dr W. E. Blatz to Dr C. M. Hincks, pp. 12-15.

²² LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (October 22, 1942, February 18, 1943).

²³ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 26.

This study adds to our understanding of the radical and distinctive nature of Birmingham's history, innovative individuals and a local authority prepared to invest in pre-school childcare. From the late eighteenth century, Birmingham's educational history has been interspersed with periods of progressive and radical activities which were in the vanguard of educational thinking at the time.²⁴ The thesis has revealed the importance of certain individuals from political and social elites. The initiator of Birmingham's Free Kindergarten movement, Julia Lloyd for example was from a local family with a tradition of civic engagement and dedicated her life to promoting pre-school education in the city (Chapter 3). Chief Education Officer, Mr P D Innes wanted to introduce beauty into the lives of the pre-school child through the equipment that they used (Chapter 7). Architect, William Benslyn's adoption of modernistic ideas in the use of educational building space to improve the education and health of children had a lasting effect. His design for the first local authority purpose-built nursery school in Brearley Street, Birmingham continues to exist and serve the overpopulated area of the city (Chapter 7). Local Medical Officers of Health, Ethel Cassie and subsequently Jean Mackintosh held overall responsibility for the provision of wartime nurseries. Cassie in particular worked to improve the health of Birmingham's young children before and during the Second World War (Chapters 4 and 7). The Marchioness of Reading, Regional Childcare Advisor for Birmingham, was a person of power, influence and ability, little got past her (Chapter 8). Her power combined with the co-ordination skills of Mr A D Edmunds, local wartime nursery organising secretary enabled them to speed up or circumvent official processes (Chapter 7). As local Welfare Officer for the Ministry of Labour 1941-

²⁴ Watts, R., 'The Policy and Practice of Enlightened Education', in: Chinn, C. and Dick, M. (eds.), *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool, 2016), pp. 193-213.

1945, Winifred Cavenagh was able to monitor when and where wartime nurseries were required, championing their cause on behalf of the mothers (Chapter 4). The early creativity and experimentation of these people built the reputation and tradition of pre-school childcare in Birmingham within which Dr William Blatz's Second World War scheme fitted (Chapters 5 and 6).

This comprehensive examination into the development of Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare provision has led to a better understanding of aspects of women's history, child psychology, the history of education and the local experience of war. Those working in early childhood services in Birmingham today will find that much in the account given here resonates with their experiences. This thesis can stand as evidence that there is continuing value in thinking about what we, as a society, really want for young children and how it can best be achieved.

Further research

This research offers a number of opportunities for others to build upon. The study could contribute significantly towards a new and more inclusive history of education nationally as well as in Birmingham. Locally, twenty-four-hour and residential nurseries established in the city or in neighbouring counties were an important part of the provision which warrant scrutiny. Without them, industry and public transport operating night shifts would have suffered. Although only two have been uncovered to date in Birmingham, factory or industrial nurseries deserve further investigation. As local industry was so desperate for female labour, it seems probable that more factory nurseries existed, and additional research might provide evidence of such facilities. Additionally, in order to explore the distinctiveness and nature of local

factory nursery provision, a comparison could be made between those established in Birmingham and other industrial areas such as Lancashire mill towns. A comparison between Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare provision with that of other large industrial cities such as Manchester or Liverpool could be another interesting project. An unusual scheme where a group of five 'day and night' nurseries was set up in the 'Potteries' deserves further research. As the lead for the Midland Civil Defence Region 9, Birmingham Council was responsible for that project, originally funded by the American Red Cross.²⁵

Architect William Benslyn, who helped to introduce the Bauhaus movement to Birmingham and designed the first local purpose-built nursery, is worthy of serious study to evaluate his wider significance, such as cinemas and primary schools. To date, his contribution to the city's wider architecture has been little recognised. He was one of the creators of Birmingham's twentieth-century landscape and helped, therefore, to shape the local culture and society.

Anna Freud and Susan Isaacs' contributions to wartime child psychology have been analysed in secondary literature.²⁶ Although Blatz appeared on the same child psychology forum platforms as these women, his contribution has been largely bypassed. The opinions and theories of Freud and Isaacs often differed from those of Blatz; a polarity which highlights opportunities for the investigation of child psychology histories that cross nations and cultures, but which remain embedded in

²⁵ TNA, MH55/1704, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries Established by News Chronicle.

²⁶ Midgley, N., 'Anna Freud: The Hampstead War Nurseries and the Role of the Direct Observation of Children for Psychoanalysis', *International Journal Psychoanalysis* (2007), volume 88, pp. 939-959; Willan, J., 'Susan Isaacs (1885-1948): Her Life, Work and Legacy', *Gender and Education* (2011), volume 23, issue 2, pp. 201-210.

local contexts. Whether Blatz's contribution to Birmingham's wartime pre-school childcare percolated through to the post-war years or into The Plowden Report (1967) is a subject that also invites further analysis. This last point leads to the likely value in researching the nature and impact of the training of nursery nurses after the war. Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre which Blatz had established continued in the post-war years and his legacy can be explored by analysing the extent to which trainees followed Blatz's childcare ideas and implemented his approaches in their work.

To conclude

The Nursery School Association had always hoped that nursery education would eventually become the cornerstone for a comprehensive education system. However, this provision remained within the Infant School. War did not change that. Wartime nurseries were only ever intended to be for the duration of the hostilities. In Birmingham, however, nursery provision did not completely disappear after the war. Some nurseries became part of the city's vision of post-war reconstruction. The accumulated lessons, whether positive or negative, which emerged from the wartime experience of Birmingham pre-school childcare shaped the peacetime structure.

During the war, the local authority and people such as Benslyn continued to look towards the future and the process of urban regeneration. Local officials tried to build new housing stock before the war, but the process was inefficient because there was nowhere to put the families while homes were rebuilt. The situation was then complicated further by the outbreak of war. Providing better support for mothers and children, including nurseries, was part of that vision of reconstruction. The local

authorities continued to retain that optimistic vision which was then applied to wartime Birmingham in difficult circumstances. In a 1943 lecture, Benslyn promoted the importance of good colour, form and simple furnishings, even in adapted buildings, when replacing bombed schools.²⁷ Birmingham had a progressive perspective, which Blatz and his team personify - that it is possible to make lives better by intervention. Locally, some wartime nurseries were retained and plans for new housing estates included nursery provision.²⁸ Improvements to the city's wartime childminding scheme were noted in case it needed to be re-established in the future. By allowing older girls at neighbouring schools to visit wartime nurseries to learn the elements of baby care, the local authority was educating mothers for the future. Similarly, this was what Blatz and his team were doing with their parenting sessions.

By the end of the hostilities wartime nurseries had become a popular institution whereas previously they were almost unknown. It was unlikely that the government would have taken steps to prohibit people with pre-school children from working. At some stage child welfare authorities would have had to step in to protect the children in some way or other.²⁹ Birmingham wartime industry could not wait for that to happen. Historically, this research has shown the council and providers of education in Birmingham to be creative, innovative and committed. The council was receptive

²⁷ *The Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 'Benslyn Lecture' (February 17 and 22, 1943), p. 4, p. 3.

²⁸ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/11/1/13-18, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945. In their report to the main committee (May 11, 1945); LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945, City of Birmingham Education Committee, Development plan: Great Barr and Kingstanding (September 20, 1945).

²⁹ TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Labour and the Woman (*sic*) Worker's Child, Provision of Nurseries, Mrs Baison, Birmingham notes and articles (c.1950), 'The Day Nurseries', p. 32.

but without the philanthropy and the foresight of a small group of local individuals, wartime pre-school childcare would not have evolved. The dynamic interaction between the limited provision, the environment, and the people themselves enabled the local council to create childcare provision on a large scale. Wartime nurseries were never intended to be a permanent arrangement, but they succeeded in raising an awareness of what could be. Working-class parents may not have originally demanded nurseries, but they came to recognise the benefit of these facilities to their children, and they challenged their closure.³⁰ It is impossible to measure precisely the significance of wartime nurseries, but because they were in place, they enabled more women to be employed in industry. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, reportedly told Blatz: 'I do not suppose anyone in this country thought before the war that a nursery school would be an essential part of our defence programme.'³¹

³⁰ Croucher, R., 'Communist Politics and Shop Stewards in Engineering, 1935-1946', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Warwick, 1977), pp. 125-128; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/AA/1/1/38-43, Proceedings of the Council, 1939-1945 (June 4, 1946).

³¹ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 165.

APPENDICES

Birmingham Settlement

Founded in 1899, Birmingham Settlement is one of the oldest charities in Birmingham. Part of a movement of social reform activists outraged by the plight of the poor in the nineteenth century, Birmingham Settlement's work originally concentrated on providing support to women and families in the seriously deprived St Mary's area, later referred to as Newtown. Originally known as the Women's Settlement, from 1919 it became Birmingham Settlement. It was founded by the National Union of Women Workers, which was not, as the name suggests, a trade union of female wage earners, but a group formed to co-ordinate the work of those voluntary organisations concerned with women and children. The women of a number of well-to-do Birmingham families became an important part of this institution which was funded by prominent citizens of the city.

Settlements were places where the educated could live in a poor area to experience the problems of their neighbours first hand. By learning about the causes of poverty they in turn might have been able to influence policy towards the poor. Women's settlements usually attracted residents who intended to make social work their career. Settlements were envisaged as places to which the residents of poor areas would come for education and recreation. They were to promote habits of providence and self-reliance to the local people. Preventative social work was enabled once relationships of trust were built between collectors and local families through weekly visits for the purpose of collecting for a provident bank.

Work carried out by the settlements was only usually known to the sections of the population who subscribed to them, resided in them or benefited from their services. For a number of years the University of Birmingham used the Settlement as its main place of practical training for studies related to social work.

The object of a Settlement was therefore: 'to find, not be the solution of need'.¹

¹ Rimmer, J., *Troubles Shared: The Story of a Settlement 1899-1979* (Birmingham, 1980).

APPENDIX 2

The Birmingham and District branch membership of the NSA of GB, December 1928 ¹

Name	Address
Miss E Ball	5 Blenheim Road, Moseley
Harrison Barrow Esq	40 Wesley (sic) Park Road, Selly Oak
Miss J Bolton	Summer Lane Nursery School
Miss Bunch	167 Waverley Road, Small Heath
Miss Burrows	12 Summer Road, Fox Hollies
Mrs Barrow Cadbury	Southfield, Edgbaston
Mrs George Cadbury Junr	Primrose Hill, Selly Oak
Mrs Norman Cadbury	Greenhill, Selly Oak
Miss A Chick	137 Byron Road, Small Heath
Mrs Constable	Birmingham Gazette Office, Corporation Street
Miss A Cooper	318 Summer Lane
Miss Dale	Mayfield, Harborne Road, Edgbaston
Miss Fernyhaugh	St George's Court, Selly Oak
Miss Gannaway	Elkington Street Council School, Infants' Dept.
Mrs Roland Gibbins	20 Pakenham Road, Edgbaston
Miss Hammond	33 Frederick Road, Edgbaston
Mr G B Hollick	Leigh Road Schools
Miss M Hornabrook	Brunnaker, Kings Norton
Miss Duncam [sic] Jones	122 Middleton Hall Road, Kings Norton
Mrs Bert Jordan	Granton, Kings Norton
Miss Jordon	Church of England School, Kenilworth
Miss E Lingford	21 Witton Road, Handsworth

¹ TNA, ED24/1466, Board of Education, The Nursery School of Great Britain 5th Annual Report (December, 1928).

Name	Address
Miss E M Lloyd	27 Colherne Court, Kensington, SW5
Miss Julia Lloyd	Hillside, Balsall Common, Coventry
Miss Lowe	10 South Road, Handsworth
Miss C A Mackintosh	Birmingham Education Office, Margaret Street
Miss P E Passmore	Dartmouth Street Infants' School
Miss W Pearson	21 Frances Road, Edgbaston
Mrs Roy Pinsent	Little Wick, Selly Hill
Miss Reynolds	Brunnaker, Kings Norton
Mrs Leyton Richards	46 Salisbury Road, Moseley
Miss E L Ross	60 Harborne Road, Edgbaston
Mrs L Arthur Smith	14 Highfield Road, Edgbaston
Miss Waite	57 Francis Road, Edgbaston
Miss W J Walmesley	138 Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak
Miss C A Webb	Eliot [sic] Street School, Nechells
Miss Whitefoord [sic]	9 Soho Road, Handsworth
Rev C A Whitfield	St Hilda's School, 123 Sandford Road
Counc Mrs H L Wilson	Elmfield, Selly Oak
Counc Miss M L Wilson	Fair Oaks, Farquar Road, Edgbaston
Miss Withey	Head of Dartmouth Street School, Infants' Dept.
Miss H D Wright	37 Woodland Road, Northfield
Associate Group-	
Sesame House Association	Miss Pinker, Pilgroves, Brasted Chart, Seven Oaks, Kent
Handsworth Labour Party (Sandwell Women's Section)	Mrs Ballinger, 50 Farcroft Road, Handsworth

Wartime pre-school childminding schemes (1939-1945)

Towards the end of 1940, the Ministry of Labour considered the possibility of creating a childminding scheme. Before the war, private minding arrangements existed in many industrial areas such as Lancashire, the Potteries and Birmingham.¹ Voluntary childminding arrangements such as those used before the war were too irregular to be relied upon to release sufficient mothers into the workplace. But Ministry of Labour officials anticipated that if a similar official arrangement could be organised nationally, a speedier release of women to the workplace would be achieved. The first national minding arrangement, originally known as the 'Daily Child Minding Scheme' but later referred to as the 'Registered Daily Guardian Scheme', was introduced on June 23, 1941.² Despite optimism by central officials the scheme was not a success.

Birmingham was one of the few towns expected to use this national scheme.³ A considerable amount of unofficial minding had been taking place in Birmingham for years, either voluntarily or for payment.⁴ When details of the government scheme were released, Birmingham officials offered constructive criticism based on their experience of the unofficial minding taking place in the area, but their opinions were ignored. Convinced it was unworkable; Birmingham officials tried to circumvent the national scheme, but eventually agreed to carry out a short trial.⁵

The Daily Child Minding Scheme did not inspire minders, mothers or Birmingham officials. Financial incentives were the main drawback for minders; however, the complex governance of the scheme did not help. Birmingham minders were already being paid a minimum of ten shillings per week and in some cases more. The national scheme proposed a weekly payment of six shillings: three shillings from the state and the remainder from the mother. This arrangement left minders registered on the scheme financially vulnerable if the mother defaulted on her share of the payment. The only guaranteed payment was the three shillings paid by the government; the amount was too small to be effective, making it unlikely that any new minders would come forward.⁶ Birmingham officials insisted that the scheme was even less attractive to mothers by not including a strategy to deal with those minders not providing appropriate childcare. Local officials considered that the

¹ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 201.

² Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018) 1941; to reduce confusion from this point on the national scheme will be referred to as the Registered Daily Guardian Scheme.

³ Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (Kent, 1984), pp. 88-89.

⁴ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 1.

⁵ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9.

⁶ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 1.

scheme was subject to a relatively high degree of monitoring which was unmanageable. It required two health visitors to complete house inspections of prospective minders for the whole of the city but the Ministry of Health only agreed to fund one.⁷ The standard of minders' homes varied and controlling the national scheme was tenuous.⁸

Birmingham officials found the Daily Child Minding Scheme impracticable due to its limitations and proposed dropping it.⁹ Reluctantly, the local authority agreed to continue the trial for a little longer. By July 16, 1941 only 30 applications had materialised out of 142 enquiries from prospective minders after the terms and conditions of the scheme had been explained. The majority of these 30 had already been minding for satisfactory payment and enquiries showed that the response would be better if the conditions were more reasonable. This position had not improved by September, when out of 264 enquiries only 100 forms had been returned. Birmingham officials were allowed to create their own scheme which was put into operation in December 1941 and remained in place until the end of the war.¹⁰ In an effort to avoid confusion the title of the 'Daily Child Minding Scheme' was changed to the 'Birmingham Children's Home Service'. The Ministry changed its own scheme's name to 'The Registered Daily Guardians Scheme' probably for the same reason.¹¹

The main point of difference between the national and local schemes was to simplify the administration for the minder and mother. Red tape and bureaucracy was cut while still retaining checks against possible fraudulent claims from both sides. Complications were reduced by removing one official department from the process, the Labour Exchange. This left the Welfare Department and Centres to deal with the scheme. Mothers paid the minder a minimum of ten shillings a week and supplied rationed foodstuffs. A monthly payment of the government grant was made to minders who, in order to collect, had to be accompanied by the child they were minding to the Welfare Centre. Documentation completed by mothers – to ensure their entitlement for the government contribution towards their childminding fees – was reduced from eleven to three forms. However, Birmingham officials were not given complete *carte blanche* with their local scheme. They wanted to compel mothers to provide their child with membership of a medical service. Central officials would not concede this point, so the local authority had to contend with introducing this purely as a recommendation. There was one aspect of the national scheme they did not seek to change. This was the assurance that the state payment would continue during short illnesses or absences from work by the mother, provided that

⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9.

⁸ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 203.

⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (July 18, 1941).

¹⁰ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 5.

¹¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (1941).

her child was still being minded by the official minder.¹² The local scheme must have been more acceptable to mothers and minders as 'within three months 382 children had been placed and by September 1942, the figure reached 1,334, settling at about 1,100'.¹³

Locally, of the small percentage of applicants who were neither relatives nor friends, there was a number from outlying districts whose homes appeared suitable. However, it was impossible to use many of these minders because they were selective about the children they would accept.¹⁴ Conversely, the least satisfactory minding arrangements were those made through Welfare Centres when difficult parents or those with troublesome children found it impossible to find a minder.¹⁵ Creativity led to some women having a sort of 'Box and Cox' arrangement, whereby two mothers shared the same job part-time, and each minded the other's children when not working.¹⁶ Provided that both women worked twenty-four hours a week it was possible that both mothers were grant-aided for their childcare. Questions arose regarding whether the mothers of minded children were actually on war-work, a point examined by Birmingham's Welfare Officer at the request of the Ministry of Labour during 1944 and 1945. In areas where the national scheme was in operation, checks revealed that up to 25% of the mothers were no longer at work, even though they were having their child minded. The local Welfare Officer for the Ministry of Labour checked a random sample of women using the Birmingham Children's Home Service; this established that most of the mothers of children minded in this scheme did carry out bona-fide work which contributed towards the war effort.¹⁷ In Birmingham, throughout the war, there were minders in excess of the need although there were pockets of shortages in particular localities.¹⁸ The author has not found any cases to date where a child was taken from the minder because the grant was refused, or where the minder relinquished their charge for that reason. However, there was a difference in respect of who these minders were. At the beginning of the Birmingham Children's Home Service scheme, 74% of the applications came from friends and neighbours of the mother, with a further 11% from relatives. By September 1942, these proportions had changed to 37% friends and neighbours, with a further 52% being relatives. At the end of the war Health Visitors considered that at least 75%, and probably 80% or more, of the minders

¹² TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 3.

¹³ Ferguson, S. and Fitzgerald, H., *History of the Second World War: Studies in the Social Services* (London, 1954), p. 202; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 6.

¹⁴ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', p. 8.

¹⁵ Cavenagh, W. E., 'The Birmingham Children's Home Service and the British National Child-minding Scheme', *Social Services Review* (March 1, 1951), volume 25, issue 1, pp. 501-508.

¹⁶ 'Box and Cox' was a term used to refer to an arrangement whereby people could make use of the same accommodation or facilities at different times, according to a strict arrangement. The term originated from a farce written by John Maddison Morton in 1847.

¹⁷ TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

were relatives.¹⁹ Without the benefit of evidence from those involved, we can only speculate as to why this shift occurred.²⁰

At the close of hostilities, the local Maternity and Child Welfare Department identified a number of deficiencies in the Birmingham Children's Home Service scheme and made recommendations, should the need arise again for this facility. By implication these suggestions highlight shortcomings in the scheme, including that relatives living in the same house should not be enrolled, and an upper age limit of fifty-five to sixty should be set instead of the wartime sixty-five. Overcrowding was not allowed (this probably meant the number of children appropriate to the size of accommodation). The minder had to be in reasonable health and have some knowledge of children and their dietetic requirements. Fireguards and separate cots had to be provided, with facilities for fresh air, exercise, and daily sleep. Children had to be taken to the minder in a clean condition. Regular compulsory attendance at a Welfare Centre had to be made by every minder with the child in their care. The minder was to receive training in a short specially-devised course similar to that provided for the Birmingham home-helps. Winifred Cavenagh, Ministry of Labour Local Welfare Officer for Birmingham during the war, suggested: 'It can be stated quite definitely that, if these conditions had been rigidly applied, very few of the wartime minders would ever have been enrolled.'²¹

It is difficult to understand why the official childminding schemes were not more successful, considering that private unofficial arrangements had been in place before the war. Cavenagh considered that minding was more suited to babies than older children, as their needs were fewer and it offered less disruption. She suggested that it was inappropriate to leave toddlers in the care of inactive elderly relatives where they were possibly restricted by the 'lack of suitable play space, equipment, companions, and often fresh air'.²²

Nationally, childminding did not achieve the impact that officials hoped for. Minders usually came from the groups who could not have been directed into work – for example, old people or another mother with young children. Therefore by minding they contributed to the manpower problem by releasing the young and able-bodied. A minder in charge of their full allocation of three children might make a maximum contribution to the labour force in production work of three full-time women workers.²³ Even though Birmingham's childminding model was considered more successful than its national counterpart, it still did not release sufficient workers to make any significant difference. Cavenagh did not believe that the childminding scheme was affected significantly by the opening of day nurseries. The need for a structured minder scheme in Birmingham only arose 'because of the Government's campaign to

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 7, 9.

²⁰ Wellcome Collection, 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, City of Birmingham' [Online], <http://www.wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: April 30, 2018), 1941.

²¹ Cavenagh, W. E., 'The Birmingham Children's Home Service and the British National Child-minding Scheme', *Social Services Review* (March 1, 1951), volume 25, issue 1, pp. 501-508.

²² TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9, Cavenagh, W. E., 'The National Childminding Scheme and The Birmingham Children's Home Service', pp. 1, 6, 9, 11-12.

²³ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

encourage women with young children to stay in the city and take up employment'.²⁴ It is probable that childminding contributed towards relieving some of the problems of releasing women into the workplace. The official schemes fell short of replacing the 159,000 private mindng arrangements estimated to exist in 1943: these were obviously preferred by mothers and minders. However, the Birmingham Children's Home Service scheme's greatest contribution was to aid the welfare of the child by bringing the care of these children under the eye of the Child Welfare Department.²⁵ Previous attempts to do this by local officials had been unsuccessful.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Biographies of the Canadian Team based at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre during the Second World War



1: William Emet Blatz, Director of the Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto ¹

Wilhelm Blatz (1895–1964), later known as William, was born in Hamilton, Toronto, and was the youngest of nine children. He acquired an early, informal start to his medical training in Corktown, Toronto, as his parents Leo and Victoria were the unofficial neighbourhood trouble-shooters for advice or medical help. His mother, a relative of Franz Mesmer (1734-1815), was usually called upon for medical assistance until a doctor arrived and would often take each of her children along in turn. Victoria 'found her youngest son [Wilhelm] best suited to the work of soothing the troubled, arbitrating family battles, coping with medical emergencies, and helping to act as midwife'. His mother wanted him to become a doctor and he appeared to have the academic ability.²

Ross Matthews MD, President of the Canadian Medical Association in 1969, described Blatz as 'a remarkable teacher and an exceptionally stimulating lecturer' who was able to tailor his courses to the comprehension of the group to whom he was talking.³ Blatz was a charismatic and amusing speaker, a role for which he was in great demand. Jocelyn Raymond, Blatz's biographer suggests that 'his main aim as a speaker and writer was to sweep away complacency and replace it with rational thought'.⁴ He was never at a loss for words or practical suggestions and 'aroused strong feelings of adulation in his admirers and outrage in his antagonists'.⁵ Mary J Wright, a strong supporter of Blatz's theories, recognised him as controversial, describing his style as provocative, as he 'deliberately shocked and challenged the

¹ TTFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W.E.) Collection, Box 16a, Chronological Clippings (1925-1971).

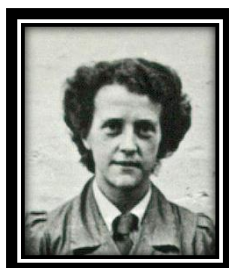
² Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 5-12.

³ Matthews, R. M., 'Permissiveness and Dr. Blatz: Where did Society's Ideas on Child-raising go Wrong?', *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (1980), volume 122, issue 1, pp. 99-101.

⁴ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 4.

⁵ Ibid.

psychological and educational establishment of his time'.⁶ That view was shared by others. Following his death in 1964, the Senate of the University of Toronto acknowledged Blatz's academic achievements while also noting his ability to be a 'general all-round disturber of the intellectual peace'.⁷



2: Althea Joyce Cornish-Bowden, employed at Havergal Ladies College Junior School, Toronto (1942)⁸

Known as Joyce Cornish-Bowden (1910-1995), she was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and was a grand-daughter of Admiral William Bowden R.N. of Devon, England. She was part of the second group of Canadians brought over by Blatz and shipping records note her profession as 'teacher'. Cornish-Bowden's major role while based at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre was to act as supervisor and teacher of matrons working in wartime nurseries. She worked for Birmingham LEA under a two-year temporary contract which was extended when the rest of the team returned to Canada in August 1944. Cornish-Bowden continued to work as a Lecture Demonstrator at Garrison Lane until December of the same year.⁹ The timeline for her employment after that is not clear but she remained in England and was holding the position of Education Secretary at the Nursery School Association (NSA) of Great Britain, London in mid-1947. By October 1949 she had progressed to the post of Director. Cornish-Bowden resigned from the NSA to become head of the Junior School at Havergal College, Toronto, Ontario, in March 1953.¹⁰ From 1958 she assumed the Principal's role at the Institute of Child Study, Toronto, until 1964, although her role changed circa 1960 when she became Supervisor of the Elementary School.¹¹

⁶ Wright, M. J., 'William Emet Blatz', in: Kimble, G., Boneau, A. and Wertheimer, M. (eds.), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology, volume 2* (Washington D.C., 1996), pp. 198-211.

⁷ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), preface.

⁸ *Wood Private Collection*, adapted from group photograph.

⁹ LOB, Archives and Collections, S76/1, Garrison Lane Log Book (December 6, 1944).

¹⁰ Hamilton, F., 'News Here and There', *Childhood Education* (March, 1953), volume 29, issue 7, pp. 331-332; *The Daily Mirror*, 'She finds Red Riding Hood wolf frightens the children' (July 29, 1947), p. 3; *The Londonderry Sentinel*, 'Derby Nursery School Association' (October 29, 1949), p. 2.

¹¹ Davidson, C., 'What's in a Name?: Chronology of Lab School Leadership', *Dr Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, Alumni Echo News* Fall 2014 - Winter 2015, p. 4.



3: Margaret Fletcher, employed as Principal of St. George's Nursery School at the Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto (1942)¹²

Margaret Fletcher (1897-1981), graduated from Bishop Strachan School in 1914 and studied psychology at the University of Toronto.¹³ She originally met Blatz as one of his students who was trained to rehabilitate First World War veterans in 1917.¹⁴ Fletcher joined Blatz at the Institute of Child Study, Toronto, in 1927, where she worked closely with him for many years as supervisor of the Nursery School (1932-1965). She was also involved with Blatz in organising the lives of the Dionne Quintuplets.¹⁵ Fletcher was part of the first group of Canadians brought over by Blatz to set up Garrison Lane. Once the centre was open, she was responsible for the nursery school until returning to Canada in August 1942. Fletcher taught nursery school teachers in Canada and in 1958 published a book which amalgamated what she had learnt and taught over thirty years.¹⁶ Her belief that music helped to calm children resulted in her publishing a book of rhymes and songs with M C Dennison which was reprinted a number of times.¹⁷ She retired as Assistant Professor from the University of Toronto in 1965 and was honoured when they opened the Day Care Centre in her name in the 1970s.¹⁸

¹² Wood Private Collection, adapted from group photograph.

¹³ Innis-Dagg, A., *The Feminine Gaze: A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and their books 1836-1945* (Canada, 2001), p. 103.

¹⁴ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 16.

¹⁵ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets* (London, 1939), pp. xi-xii.

¹⁶ Innis-Dagg, A., *The Feminine Gaze: A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and their books 1836-1945* (Canada, 2001), p. 103; Fletcher, M. I., *The Adult and the Nursery School Child* (Toronto, 1974).

¹⁷ Fletcher, M. I. and Dennison, M. C., *The High Road of Song. For Nursery Schools and Kindergartens. Nursery rhymes, songs, singing games, and playlets* (Canada, 1946).

¹⁸ Innis-Dagg, A., *The Feminine Gaze: A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and their books 1836-1945* (Canada, 2001), p. 103.



**4: Nancy Margaret Griffin, employed at The Study (a private girls school),
Montreal (1942) ¹⁹**

Nancy Griffin (1911- 2002) was part of the second group of women brought over by Blatz. Griffin was born in England but worked as a teacher in Canada. While based at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre, Griffin's major role was that of supervisor and teacher to the matrons working in wartime nurseries. She worked for Birmingham LEA under a two-year temporary contract. To date, more has been established about Griffin's personal rather than her academic life. On December 29, 1943, Griffin married Flight Officer Antony Dutton Chapman, R.C.A.F. (Navigator) in Birmingham.²⁰ Chapman was also born in England, emigrating as a child with his family to Canada. When the other Canadian women returned to Canada in 1944, Griffin remained in England, probably because her husband was still based here. Sadly, their marriage was short as Chapman was recorded as missing presumed killed during air operations on Bochum, Germany, November 5, 1944.²¹ Nancy Chapman married another Englishman in 1954 and remained in the UK. It is not clear whether she continued to work in education.



**5: Dorothy Eleanor Hamilton, employed at Elmwood School (an independent
day school for girls), Ottawa (1942) ²²**

Eleanor Hamilton (1913-2007) graduated from Branksome Hall, an independent girls' school, Toronto, before pursuing her career in early childhood education at the University of Toronto. She subsequently taught at Windy Ridge Day School and

¹⁹ *Wood Private Collection*, adapted from group photograph.

²⁰ *Ancestry*, English register of marriages, 'October, November, December 1943' [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019).

²¹ *Ancestry*, 'Canada, WWII Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947', Chapman, Antony Dutton, Regimental number J24548 [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019).

²² *Wood Private Collection*, adapted from group photograph.

Elmwood School in Ottawa.²³ Hamilton was one of the second group of Canadians brought over by Blatz and her occupation is recorded as 'teacher'. She was employed on a two-year temporary contract by Birmingham LEA as a teacher, while at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre. Hamilton returned to Canada in August 1944 where she married Donald William Morrison in 1951.²⁴ It is unclear whether she continued working following her marriage.



6: Anne Louise Harris, employed at Windy Ridge Day School, Toronto (1942)²⁵

Anne Harris (1906-1997) was director of Windy Ridge, an elementary school which operated in close association with the Institute of Child Study, Toronto, and was under the direction of Blatz.²⁶ Harris was a student of Blatz at his Institute of Child Study when preparing for a career as a nursery school teacher.²⁷ Along with Millichamp and Fletcher, she also worked with the Dionne Quintuplets.²⁸ Harris was part of the first group of Canadians brought over by Blatz to set up Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre. She worked in the nursery school until returning to Canada in August 1942. Harris became Blatz's second wife when they married in 1946, at which time she became a housewife, supporting her husband until his death.²⁹ However, she donated time to a nursery school project held in a Toronto community centre.³⁰

²³ *Globe and Mail*, 'Obituary Dorothy Eleanor Hamilton' (August 31, 2007), p. 27.

²⁴ *The Toronto Daily Star*, 'Weddings' (October 3, 1951), p. 27.

²⁵ *Wood Private Collection*, adapted from group photograph.

²⁶ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

²⁷ Callwood, J., *Maclean's*, 'Famous families at home: The Dr William Blatzes', January 3, 1959, volume 72, issue 1, pp. 18-19, 31-32 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: June 18, 2016).

²⁸ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets*, (London, 1939), pp. xi-xii.

²⁹ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Chronology (revised February, 1994). Blatz's first marriage was to Marjorie Rowland in January 1922. Cook County marriage index, 1914-1942, p. 815.

³⁰ Callwood, J., *Maclean's*, 'Famous families at home: The Dr William Blatzes', January 3, 1959, volume 72, issue 1, pp. 18-19, 31-32 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: June 18, 2016), pp. 18-19, 31-32.



7: Margaret Maude Hincks, employed at University of Michigan Nursery School (1942)³¹

Margaret Hincks (1915-2010) was the eldest daughter of Dr Clarence Meredith Hincks, Canadian physician and mental health reformer. It was her father who made the first journey with Blatz to England in early 1942, to offer help for pre-school children during the war. Margaret's younger sister attended the Institute of Child Study, Toronto.³² Margaret's occupation is recorded as 'teacher' and she was one of the second group of Canadians brought over by Blatz. Hincks was employed by Birmingham LEA under a two-year contract as a nursery school teacher while at Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre and returned home to Canada in August 1944. Her post-war career focused on early childhood education with Forest Hill and Humber College Toronto.³³ By 1949, Hincks was President of the Toronto Nursery Education Association.³⁴ This association was founded by staff of the Institute of Child Study, so presumably Hincks returned to work there after leaving Birmingham.³⁵



8: Isabel Alison Logan Mack, employed at St George's School, Ottawa, Ontario (1942)³⁶

Alison Mack (1904-1995) was born in Scotland but was working in Canada in 1942. Blatz brought her back as part of the second group to work at Garrison Lane Nursery

³¹ Wood Private Collection, adapted from group photograph.

³² Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), p. 51.

³³ Humphrey Miles, 'Obituary Margaret Maude Hincks' *Humphrey Funeral Home* [Online], <http://www.humphreymiles.com> (Accessed: January 14, 2016).

³⁴ *The Toronto Daily Star*, 'Extremes of Emotionalism in Child Care Deprecated' (May 17, 1949), p. 28.

³⁵ Varga, D., *Constructing the Child: A History of Canadian Day Care* (Canada, 1997).

³⁶ Wood Private Collection, adapted from group photograph.

Training Centre.³⁷ Passenger sailing lists record her profession as 'teacher'. Mack worked for Birmingham LEA under a two-year contract. She was responsible for the Garrison Lane Nursery School while in Birmingham, although Wright was on hand to ensure that Blatz's principles were followed. Mack's temporary employment with Birmingham LEA terminated in August 1944. She married an Edinburgh man, Leonard T. M. Gray, in 1946.



9: Mary Pauline McFarland, employed at Manor Road Nursery School, Toronto (1942)³⁸

Mary McFarland was a graduate of the Institute of Child Study and director of Manor Road Nursery School, which was Canada's first and longest-running co-operative nursery school, beginning in 1937.³⁹ Co-operative nurseries were pre-schools with parents in charge (usually middle-class parents).⁴⁰ McFarland was part of the first group of Canadians brought over by Blatz to set up Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre in June 1942. From August of the same year she was employed by Birmingham LEA under a two-year contract similar to women in the second group. At that point she became a supervisor and teacher to matrons in wartime nurseries. While in England, she married fellow Canadian, Captain Neil Carmichael Smith, at Weoley Hill Village Church, Birmingham, on August 15, 1942.⁴¹ McFarland-Smith eventually returned to Canada in August 1944. To date, no evidence of her career after the war has been found.

³⁷ *Wood Private Collection*, Prochner, L., and Howe, N., Transcript of interview, Mary J Wright (June 15, 1995).

³⁸ *Wood Private Collection*, adapted from group photograph.

³⁹ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁴⁰ *Child Care Information Exchange*, Hewes, D. W., 'Co-ops - Preschools with parents in charge' [Online], <http://www.childcareexchange.com> (Accessed: November 16, 2016).

⁴¹ TFRBL, MS.Coll.134, Blatz (W. E.) Collection, Box 31, Bernherdt, K. S. (ed.), *Parent Educational Bulletin*, The Institute of Child Study, Number 19 (October, 1942); *Ancestry*, English register of marriages, 'October, November, December 1943' [Online], <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> (Accessed: January 2016-December 2019).



10: Dorothy Akers Millichamp, employed as Assistant Director of the Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto (1942)⁴²

Dorothy Millichamp (1908-2001) was born in Toronto but studied at Oxford University, England, receiving her BA in Economics and Languages in 1929. Her career in child education began in 1931 when, after leaving her job as assistant in the Biology Department, University of Toronto, she joined Blatz to study at his Institute of Child Study for her MA.⁴³ She soon became Blatz's deputy, not only running the school with Margaret Fletcher and others but helping to organise the lives and environment of the Dionne Quintuplets.⁴⁴ Millichamp was part of the first group of Canadians brought over by Blatz to set up Garrison Lane Nursery Training Centre. She was responsible for nursery staff training until returning to Canada in August 1942. While in Britain, Millichamp spoke on child development for the BBC and lectured at Oxford and Cambridge (probably Universities).⁴⁵ She considered her time at Garrison Lane as a formative experience in her own professional development.⁴⁶

On her return to Canada in 1942, she was seconded to deal with the administration, organisation, and expansion of wartime day nurseries in Ontario. In 1948 she became headmistress of Bishop Strachan School, but in 1952 she re-joined the Institute of Child Study until its closure in 1968. With Mary Northway, another former Blatz student, Millichamp founded the Brora Centre, where research into child development could continue.⁴⁷ Friends described her as having a strong intellect, vision, curiosity and independence.⁴⁸

⁴² Wood Private Collection, adapted from group photograph.

⁴³ Innis-Dagg, A., *The Feminine Gaze: A Canadian Compendium of Non-Fiction Women Authors and their books 1836-1945* (Canada, 2001), p. 215.

⁴⁴ Blatz, W. E., *The Five Sisters: A Study of the Dionne Quintuplets* (London, 1939), xii.

⁴⁵ Institute of Child Study Alumni Association Newsletter, *Alumni Echo*, Spring 2002, issue 1, 'Remembering Dore, A tribute to Dorothy Akers Millichamp, A Child Studies Pioneer', p. 3.

⁴⁶ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁴⁷ Raymond, J. M., *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 191, 221.

⁴⁸ Institute of Child Study Alumni Association Newsletter, *Alumni Echo*, Spring 2002, issue 1, 'Remembering Dore, A tribute to Dorothy Akers Millichamp, A Child Studies Pioneer', p. 3.



11: Mary Jean Wright, Post-graduate student (1942) ⁴⁹

Mary Wright (1915-2014) was a graduate student in the Psychology Department at the University of Toronto whose studies were disrupted by the outbreak of war. She spent time in and helped out at St George's Nursery by playing the piano while studying the young children. Wright was invited to join the team to work on the project in Birmingham and was part of the first group of Canadians brought over by Blatz to set up Garrison Lane. From August 1942 she was employed by Birmingham LEA under a two-year contract similar to that offered to the women in the second group. When Blatz and his senior colleagues returned to Canada at the end of the first summer, he left Wright in charge of all student instruction. Wright was responsible for teaching student courses in both nursery school theory and practice, and monitored the pre-school programme.⁵⁰ She was also responsible for carrying out the Stanford-Binet tests on the nursery children. Wright eventually returned to Canada in August 1944 and considered that her time working at Garrison Lane was a formative experience in her own professional development, which helped to set and reinforce her professional course as advocate for children's welfare.⁵¹

By the end of the Second World War Wright's identity as a child psychologist and early childhood educator back in Canada was firmly established.⁵² Her long professional career in child psychology paved the way for other women scholars. She was the first female director of the Canadian Psychological Association in 1959, later becoming its President in 1968. In 1960 she was appointed Chair of Western University's Psychology Department, the first female in Canada to achieve this position. Wright continued speaking publicly and publishing into her ninety-seventh year, receiving many honours and awards, including four honorary degrees from Canadian universities.⁵³ The obituary in Wright's hometown local press described her as a 'real character', 'feisty', 'very social' and 'not afraid to speak her mind'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Wood Private Collection, adapted from group photograph.

⁵⁰ Wright, M. J., *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (Canada, 1997), p. 148.

⁵¹ Prochner, L., and Howe, N., 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain: The 60th Anniversary', *Journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children* (2001), volume 26, issue 2, pp. 21-27.

⁵² Wright, M. J., *Zestful Lives: The Unusual Wrights of Strathroy 1865-1995* (Canada, 1997), p. 148.

⁵³ *Your Life Moments*, 'Obituary Dr Mary Jean Wright' *Your Life Moments* [Online], www.yourlifemoments.ca (Accessed: May 3, 2014).

⁵⁴ The London Free Press, 'Obituary Dr Mary Jean Wright' [Online], <http://www.lfpress.ca> (Accessed: May 2, 2014).

Former graduate student and friend, Professor Nina Howe, considered Wright to be a 'very wise and humane person' and 'a great mentor and role model'.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *Your Life Moments*, 'Obituary Dr Mary Jean Wright' *Your Life Moments* [Online], www.yourlifemoments.ca (Accessed: May 3, 2014).

APPENDIX 5

Children's Books used by William Blatz and his team

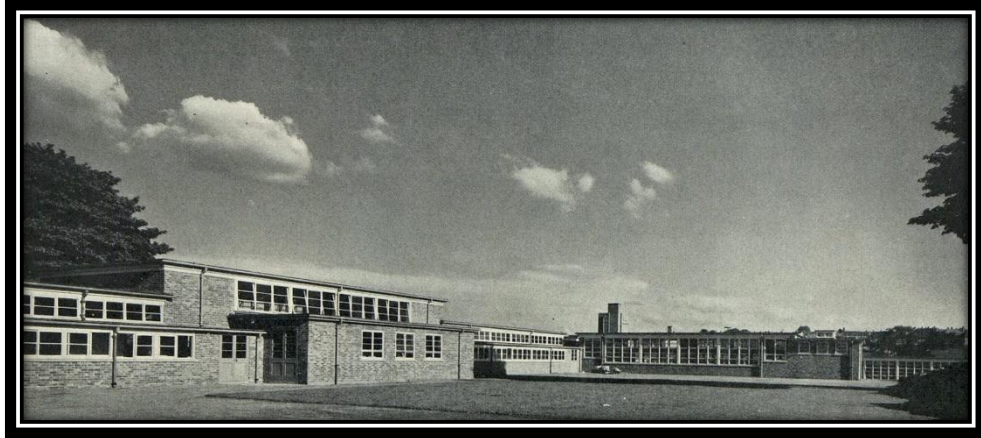
Used in St George's Nursery School, Toronto	Author
Picture-books	
A Book of Steamers	
A Book of Many Motors	
The Big Book of Engines	
All Round the Farm	
Throughout Field and Wood	
Home Friends	
The First Picturebook	M. S. Martin
Baby's First Book	
On Our Farm	J. Y. Beaty, J C. Allen (illus.)
Forest Friends	F. N. Shankland and F. B. Peat
Baby Animals	D. Thorne and F. B. Peat
We Go To Nursery School	M. Poppleton and W. E. Blatz
The Real Picturebook Selections	
Story-books (2 to 5 years)	
The Three Little Kittens	Peter Rabbit Series
The Three Bears	Peter Rabbit Series
Little Black Sambo	Peter Rabbit Series (<i>sic</i>)
Old Tales Retold: Angus and the Ducks	M. Flack
Angus Lost	M. Flack
Peter Rabbit	Peter Rabbit Series
This Little Pig	H. and A. Evers
(3 to 5 Years)	
Ask Mr Bear	M. Flack
Millions of Cats	Wanda Gag
The Selfish Fox	Peter Rabbit Series
Butterwick Farm	C. Webb
Social Science Readers	H. S. Reade, E. Lee
(4 to 5 Years)	
The Runaway Sardine	E. L. Brock
The Twins and Tabiffa	C. Heward, S. B. Pearse
Grub-his Tale	D. Faber, A. Wright
The Greedy Goat	E. L. Brock
The Story about Ping	M. Flack, K. Wiese
The Art Book	F. Derrick
This is the Book	J. Smalley
My Bookhouse Vol. 1. In the Nursery	O. Beaupré Miller (ed.)

Additional List used at Garrison Lane Nursery School	Author
Hello, Judy	C. Becker
The Baby Car	L. Lenske
Saturday Walk	E. Wright
Another Here-and-Now Story Book Senior	L. Sprague Mitchell
Told Under the Blue Umbrella	Assoc. for Childhood Education
The Three Billy Goats Gruff	A. O'Grady and F. Throof
Copy Kitten	H. and A. Evers
Pokey Bear	H. and A. Evers
Ezra the Elephant	M. Barrows
Zozo	H. A. Rey
Eight Nursery Tales	Edited by Watty Piper
The Story of Ferdinand	Munro Leaf
Caps for Sale	E. Slobodkina
Willy Nilly	M. Flack
Bonny's Wish	R. Gay
Patsy Podger and the Chilly Scarecrow	J. Ford

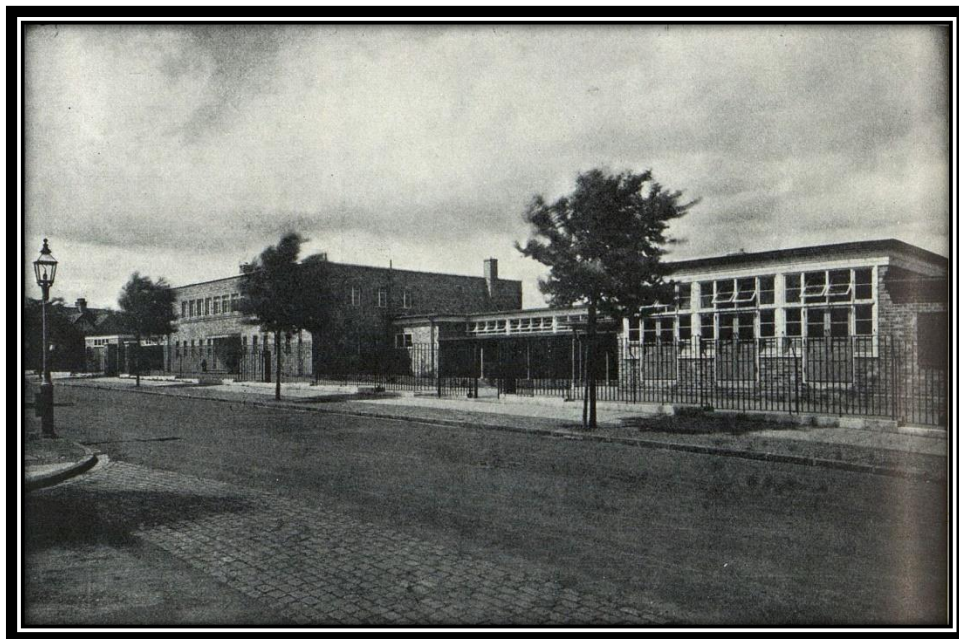
1

¹ Blatz, W. E., *Understanding the Young Child* (London, 1948), pp. 200-203.

William Benslyn's elementary school designs circa 1938



Infant and junior school, Harborne, Birmingham ¹



York Road School, Hall Green, Birmingham ²

¹ Benslyn, W. T., *The Architects' Journal* (July 14, 1938), volume 88, issue 2269, 'Birmingham', pp. 71-106 [Online], <http://www.proquest.com> (Accessed: January 24, 2018).

² Author unidentified, *The Architects' Journal* (December 15, 1938), volume 88, issue 2291, 'Analysis of a Building: York Road School, Hall Green, Birmingham', pp. 984-992 [Online], <http://www.proquest.org> (Accessed: January 24, 2018).

APPENDIX 7

Birmingham Wartime Nurseries (Managed by Public Health Department)

		Type	Date of opening	Cost of build or adaptation	Capacity
1	Acocks Green Welfare Centre, 189 Shirley Road, 27	Welfare Centre	16.2.42	£1,613 11s 9d	25
2	30a Allens Croft Road, Stirchley (Pineapple Estate), 14		15.2.43	£3,618 19s 11d	60
3	Alma Street, Aston, 6	School	27.7.42	£775 18s 3d	60
4	186 Bacchus Road, Winson Green, 18		1.11.43	£3,183 2s 8d	60
5	240 Beeches Road, Gt. Barr, 22	Hutment	24.8.42	£2,988 8s 8d	60
6	245 Birchfield Road, Birmingham, 20		1.6.42	£833 2s 8d	52
7	298 Birchfield Road, Birmingham, 20	Welfare Centre	30.9.40	£1,317 12s 8d	60
	298 Birchfield Road, Birmingham, 20	Hutment			
8	17 Bloomsbury Street, Nechells, 7	Welfare Centre	16.9.40	£524 15s 9d	60
9	38 Bloomsbury Street, Nechells, 7	Hutment	29.11.43	£3,602 6s 3d	60
10	358 Bordesley Green East. (Stuarts Rd), 9		22.2.43	£4,147 9s 7d	60
11	1 Bournbrook Road, Selly Oak, 29		30.3.42	£1,176 15s 7d	43
12	1831 Bristol Road South, Rubery, 45	Hutment	7.5.43	£3,581 8s 0d	60
13	293 Camden Street, Birmingham, 18		13.12.43	£3,216 13s 5d	60
14	Carnegie Institute, Hunters Road, 19	Welfare Centre	12.8.40	£215 12s 1d	32
15	224 Cartland Road, Stirchley, 30	Hutment	21.6.43	£4,063 5s 11d	60
16	326 Charles Road, Small Heath, 10	Hutment	8.3.43	£3,752 18s 7d	60
17	Children's Hospital, Ladywood Road, 16		12.1.42	£290 12s 6d	80
18	76 City Road, Edgbaston, 16		9.3.42	£976 10s 11d	50
19	146 Coleshill Road, Washwood Heath, 8 (Day)		16.3.42	£715 19s 10d	25
	146 Coleshill Road, Washwood Heath, 8	24 Hour			

		Type	Date of opening	Cost of build or adaptation	Capacity
20	693/7 Coventry Road, Birmingham 10	Welfare Centre	30.9.40	£1,750 14 s 6d	78
21	2186 Coventry Road, Sheaf Lane, Sheldon, 26	Hutment	28.6.43	£3,489 0s 1d	60
22	2314 Coventry Road, 26		9.3.42	£692 9s 0d	
23	127 Crossfield Road, Lea Hall, 33	Hutment	17.11.42	£3,451 3s 1d	60
24	143 Flaxley Road, Stechford, 9		24.8.42	£1, 024 4s 2d	40
25	Flint Green House, Sherbourne Road, Acocks Green, 27 (Day)		18.5.42	£1, 029 10s 1d	52
	Flint Green House, Sherbourne Road, Acocks Green, 27	24 Hour			
26	25 Francis Road, Edgbaston, 16		24.7.44		
27	131 Frankley Beeches Road, Northfield, 31	Hutment	22.3.43	£3,619 8s 10d	60
28	117 Garretts Green Lane, Sheldon, 26	Hutment	31.1.44	£3,585 1s 9d	60
29	5 Goodway Road, Perry Barr, 22	Hutment	13.7.42	£3,212 6s 11d	60
30	461 Gospel Lane, Acocks Green, 27		1.2.43	£3,151 16s 7d	60
31	23/25 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, 11	Health Centre	18.5.42	£1,597 9s 9d	60
32	77 Gt. Brook Street, Ashted Row, 7		23.3.42	£966 17s 5d	
33	257 Hagley Road, Birmingham 16	24 Hour	23.3.42	£492 10s 11d	
34	50 Highfield Road, Alum Rock, 8		22.2.43	£4, 038 18s 2d	60
35	108 Hurst Street, Birmingham, 5		8.6.42	£1, 018 9s 8d	37
36	90/92 Islington Row, Birmingham, 15		20.4.42	£1,164 10s 3d	50
37	73 Jerry's Lane, Erdington, 23	Hutment	5.10.42	£3,099 7s 8d	60
38	Kingstanding Centre, 298 Warrens Farm Road, 23	Welfare Centre	16.2.42	£1,068 3s 10d	22
39	26 Kingston Road, Small Heath, 9 (Kingston Hill Recreation Ground)	Hutment	28.9.42	£3,245 3s 5d	60
40	Lindsworth Cottage, Lindsworth Approach, Kings Norton, 30		30.3.42	£557 6s 3d	
41	295 Marsh Hill, Brookvale Park, Erdington, 23	Hutment	1.3.43	£3,490 7s 7d	60
42	79 Marsh Lane Welfare Centre, Erdington, 23	Welfare Centre	12.1.42	£1,286 6s 2d	34
43	395 Monument Road, Ladywood, 1	Welfare Centre	14.10.40	£996 14s 9d	36
	Monument Road	Hutment	2.3.42	£372 0s 0d	20

		Type	Date of opening	Cost of build or adaptation	Capacity
44	Moseley Hall Convalescent Home, Alcester Road, 13	24 Hour	9.3.42	£330 11s 8d	
45	120 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, 12		23.11.42	£1,645 3s 5d	44
46	Oaklands Recreation Ground, 1328 Coventry Road, 26	Hutment	1.2.43	£3, 046 6s 9d	60
47	260 Oxhill Road, Handsworth, 21		21.9.42	£1,145 18s 3d	43
48	111 Park Road, Aston, 6		24.8.42	£673 3s 2d	
49	41/43 Park Road, Moseley, 13		7.9.42	£785 3s 6d	35
50	57 Park Road, Sparkhill, 11 (Sparkhill Park)	Hutment	21.9.42	£3,437 10s 2d	60
51	15 Pershore Road South, Cotteridge, 30	Hutment	14.9.42	£3,367 8s 1d	60
52	92/94 Pershore Road, Balsall Heath, 5		27.4.42	£1,104 17s 9d	48
53	Pype Hayes Hall, Chester Road, 24 (Day)		12.08.40	£668 13s 3d	60
	Pype Hayes Hall, Chester Road, 24	24 Hour	or 10.11.41		
54	27 Quinton Lane, 32 (Ridgeacre Road)	Hutment	24.8.42	£3,213 17s 9d	60
55	81 Ravenhurst Road, Harborne, 17 (Day)		18.5.42	£988 16s 7d	60
	81 Ravenhurst Road, Harborne, 17	24 Hour			
56	156 Reddings Lane, Greet, 11 (Greet Recreation Ground)	Hutment	28.9.42	£3,301 18s 2d	60
57	111 School Road, Highters Heath, Yardley Wood, 14	Hutment	after 27.11.42	£3,881 17s 9d	60
58	123 Selwyn Road, Edgbaston, 16 (Summerfield Park)	Hutment	26.10.42	£3,152 6s 3d	60
59	Smith Street School, Gt Hampton Row, Hockley, 19		10.8.42	£804 7s 7d	
60	1 Soho Road, Birmingham, 21		23.8.42	£1,219 9s 5d	48
61	362/4 Soho Road, Birmingham, 21		20.9.43	£1,763 8s 1d	50
62	40 Somerset Road, Handsworth Wood, 20 (Day)		21.9.42	£913 5s 6d	48
	40 Somerset Road, Handsworth Wood, 20	24 Hour			
63	1/5 Springfield Road, King's Heath, 14 (Day)		20.7.42	£1,291 3s 9d	55
	1/5 Springfield Road, King's Heath, 14	24 Hour			
64	Sunnybank Avenue, Witton, 23		12.1.42	£3, 644 11s 1d	60
65	The Circle, 750 Kingstanding Road, Birmingham 22 (Dunedin Road)	Hutment	29.6.42	£2.970 0s 6d	60

		Type	Date of opening	Cost of build or adaptation	Capacity
66	The Hawthorns, Ladywood Road, Edgbaston, 16 (Salvation Army)		3.6.40	£30 8s 0d	
67	7 The Heathway, Bucklands End, Castle Bromwich, 8	Hutment	26.10.42	£3,690 19s 10d	60
68	74/78 The Meadway, Lea Hall, Yardley, 26 (Day)		18.5.42	£1,140 18s 9d	
	74/78 The Meadway, Lea Hall, Yardley, 26	24 Hour			
69	The Settlement, Summer Lane, 19 + extension for 20 additional children		23.9.40	£827 11s 0d	70
70	Treaford Lane Welfare Centre, Washwood Heath, 8	Welfare Centre	8.12.41	£1,104 12s 4d	70
71	73 Trinity Road, Birchfields, Witton, 6		4.5.42	£858 9s 11d	44
72	503 Washwood Heath Road, 8 (Ward End Park)	Hutment	10.8.42	£2,990 3s 0d	60
73	121 Weoley Castle Road, Weoley Castle, 29	Hutment	24.5.43	£4,122 16s 4d	60
74	202 West Heath Road, Birmingham, 31	Hutment	14.9.42	£4,600 16s 11d	60
75	90 Westley Road, Acocks Green, 27		22.6.42	£962 15s 9d	44
76	Wheelright Road Day Nursery, 425 Tyburn Road, Erdington, 24	Hutment	10.8.42	£3,105,16s 8d	60
77	Witton Isolation Hospital, Corner Hawthorn & College Road, Kingstanding, 22		12.1.42	£826 15s 7d	
78	Women's Hospital, Showell Green Lane, Sparkhill, 11		11.5.42	£470 8s 2d	
79	46 Wordsworth Road, Small Heath, 10		13.4.42	£1,385 18s 0d	40
80	671 Yardley Wood Road, (Billesley Common), 14	Hutment	1.2.43	£3,629 1s 5d	60
81	Yardley Wood Welfare Centre, Highfield Road, 14	Welfare Centre	2.3.42	£1,305 0s 6d	35
82	Y.W.C.A. College Walk, Selly Oak, 29		24.8.42	£1,108 4s 11d	34
	Y.W.C.A. College Walk, Selly Oak, 29 (Sick Bay)				

¹ Compiled by the author from data taken from TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries; TNA, MH55/1702, Ministry of Health, Wartime Nurseries, Region 9; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BM/1/1/30-35, Birmingham Public Health and Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 1939-1945.

Nursery Schools or Nursery Classes managed by Birmingham LEA as at April 23, 1942

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
1	Acocks Green, Warwick Road	27	20	9.00 - 4.30	
2	Ada Road, Small Heath	9	8		
3	Aldridge Road	44	13		
4	All Saints C.E, All Saints Street	18	10		
5	Alston Road (-)	9	6		
6	Alum Rock, Alum Rock Road (-)	8	11		
7	Anglesey Street	19	1		
8	Arden Road (-)	11	3		
9	Aston Hall Road (-)	6	11		
10	Audley Road, Yardley	33	15	8.30 - 4.30	
11	Barford Road	16	8		
12	Bartley Green	32	5		
13	Beeches Road	42	21		
14	Benson Road	14	63	8.30 - 4.30	
15	Bierton Road, Yardley (-)	25	17	8.30 - 4.30	
16	Billesley, Trittiford Road	13	41	8.30 - 4.30	
17	Birches Green, Birches Green Road (-)	24	14	8.30 - 4.30	
18	Birchfield Road	6	3		
19	Bishop Ryder's, Gem Street	4	3		
20	Bloomsbury, Lingard Street	7	2		
21	Bordesley Trinity C.E., Camp Hill	12	5		
22	Boulton Road, Handsworth	21	6		

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
23	Bournville, Linden Road (Denominational)	30	9		
24	Brearley Street	19	140	8.00 - 6.00	8.00 - 1.00
25	Bristol Street	5	1		
26	Burbury Street	19	24	9.00 - 4.00	
27	Burlington Street	6	12		
28	Camden Street	1	11		
29	Canterbury Road, Birchfield	20	13		
30	Christ Church C.E., Claremont Road, Sparkbrook	11	3		
31	Church Road, Yardley	33	0		
32	City Road	16	36	8.30 - 4.30	
33	Clifton Road, Balsall Heath	12	17		
34	Cockshut Hill, Yardley (+)	26	19		
35	College Road County Primary, Moseley	13	10		
36	Colmore Road, Kings Heath	14	11		
37	Corpus Christi R. C., Primary School, Stechford	33	2		
38	Cotteridge, Kings Norton	30	7		
39	Cowper Street	19	28	8.30 - 4.30	
40	Cranbourne Road (-)	22	9	8.30 - 5.00	
41	Cromwell Street (-)	7	2	8.30 - 5.00	
42	Dartmouth Street (+)	7	90	8.00 - 6.30	8.00 - 1.00
43	Dennis Road	12	4		
44	Dixon Road, Cooksey Road	10	3		
45	Dolphin Lane, Acocks Green	27	5		
46	Dorrington Road	22	19		
47	Dulwich Road	22	21	8.30 - 4.30	

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
48	Eliot Street, Nechells (-)	7	17		
49	Elkington Street	6	10		
50	English Martyrs R.C., Evelyn Road, Sparkhill	11	4		
51	Erdington C.E., High Street	23	7		
52	Erdington R.C., Sutton Road	23	2		
53	Foundry Road	18	10		
54	Four Dwellings, Quinton	32	1		
55	Gem Street Deaf	4	3		
56	George Dixon's Elementary, City Road	17	6		
57	George St West P.D.	18	1		
58	Golden Hillock Road, Sparkhill	11	27	8.30 - 6.30	
59	Greet, Warwick Road	11	24	8.30 - 5.30	8.15 - 1.00
60	Grendon Road	14	9		
61	Gunter Road	24	3		
62	Hall Green, Stratford Road	28	4		
63	Hartfield Crescent	27	3		
64	Hastings Road	23	25		
65	Hebrew, Birmingham Talmud Torah, St Luke's Road, Edgbaston	5	1		
66	Highters Heath	14	10		
67	Hobmore Road, South Yardley	25	9		
68	Holy Family R.C., Old Know Road	10	5		
69	Holy Rosary, Saltley	8	6		
70	Holy Souls R.C., Mallard Close, Acocks Green	27	3		
71	Holy Trinity C.E., Wilson Road, Handsworth	19	3		
72	Hope Street	5	2		

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
73	Icknield Street	18	4		
74	Ingleton Road	8	3		
75	Islington, Pigott Street	15	4		
76	Jervoise Road (-)	29	16	8.45 - 5.00	
77	King's Norton	30	4		
78	Kingsland Road, Erdington	22	6		
79	Kingstanding R.C., Warren Farm Road	22	16		
80	Lakey Lane	28	11		
81	Lea Village, Yardley (+)	33	25	8.00 - 6.00	
82	Leigh Road	8	3	8.30 - 5.00	
83	Loxton Street, Bloomsbury	7	10		
84	Lozells Street	19	9		
85	Marlborough Road	10	5		
86	Marsh Hill	23	17		
87	Mary Street	12	4		
88	Maryvale R.C., Great Barr (Old Oscott)	44	3		
89	Moor End Lane, Erdington	24	7		
90	Moseley C.E., School Road	13	1		
91	Moseley School for the Deaf, Moseley Road	12	1		
92	Moseley Road	12	21		
93	Nansen Road, Saltley	8	10		
94	Nelson Street	1	6		
95	Northfield C.E., St Laurence	31	23		
96	Oakley Road	10	1		
97	Oratory R.C., Hyde Road	16	20		

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
98	Osborne Road	21	8		
99	Osler Street	16	23		
100	Paganel Road	29	22	8.45 - 4.00	
101	Paget Road, Pype Hayes	24	13	8.30 - 4.30	
102	Peckham Road, Kingstanding	22	12	8.30 - 5.00	
103	Pineapple Estate, Allens Croft Road, Kings Heath	14	12		
104	Pitmaston Road	28	3		
105	Princethorpe Road, Weoley Castle (+)	29	25	8.30 - 5.00	
106	Quinton C.E., Hagley Road West	32	3		
107	Raddlebarn Lane, Selly Oak	29	9		
108	Rea Street (+)	5	84	8.30 - 5.00	
109	Red Hill, Hay Mills	25	3	8.30 - 5.00	
110	Ridpool Road, Yardley (+)	33	16	8.30 - 7.00	
111	Rookery Road, Handsworth	21	2		
112	Rubery	45	15		
113	Ryland Road, Erdington	24	9		
114	Sacred Heart, Presbury Road, Aston	6	10		
115	Selly Park, Pershore Road	29	15		
116	Severne Road, Acocks Green	27	20	8.30 - 6.00	
117	Slade Road	23	20		
118	Sladefield Road	8	10		
119	Smith Street	19	3		
120	Somerville Road	10	14		
121	SS. Mary & John, 20 Gravelly Hill North	23	1		
122	St Benadict's Road	10	5		

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
123	St Joseph's R. C.	30	4		
124	St Mary's, Whitehouse Street and Avenue Road, Aston	6	11		
125	St. Alban's C.E., Leopold Street	12	12		
126	St. Anne's C.E., Devon Street, Duddeston	7	9		
127	St. Anne's R.C., Alcester Street	12	6		
128	St. Asaph's C.E., Bow Street	1	16		
129	St. Augustine's R.C., Oxhill Road	21	2		
130	St. Barnabas' C.E., Ryland Street	16	0		
131	St. Catherine's R.C., Windmill Street	1	3		
132	St. Chad's R.C., Shadwell Street and Brearley Street	4	17	8.30 - 4.30	
133	St. Clement's., High Park Street	7	7		
134	St. Edwards. R.C., Raddlebarn Road, Selly Oak	29	3		
135	St. George's., Beaufort Road, Edgbaston	16	14		
136	St. Georges C.E., Great Russell Street	19	5		
137	St. James' C.E., Brewery Street, Handsworth	21	4		
138	St. John's C.E., Johnstone Street, Ladywood	16	12		
139	St. John's C.E., Stratford Road, Sparkhill	11	5		
140	St. John's R.C., Balsall Heath	12	3		
141	St. Joseph's R.C., Long Acre, Nechells	7	0		
142	St. Mary's C.E., Broad Road, Acocks Green	27	3		
143	St. Mary's C.E., Church Hill Road, Handsworth	20	0		
144	St. Mary's C.E., Selly Oak	29	14		
145	St. Mary's R.C., Wills Street	19	17		
146	St. Mary's R.C., Vivian Road, Harborne	17	1		
147	St. Matthew, Duddeston Manor Road	7	12	8.30 - 4.30	

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
148	St. Matthias C.E., Wheeler Street, Hockley	19	9		
149	St. Michael's C.E., Thornhill Road, Handsworth	11	6		
150	St. Michael's R.C., Boardesly Street, Digbeth	5	1		
151	St. Patrick's C.E., Highgate Street	12	1		
152	St. Patrick's R.C., Dudley Road	18	7		
153	St. Paul's C.E., Spencer Street	18	10		
154	St. Peter's C.E., Old Church Road, Harborne	17	17		
155	St. Peter's R.C., St Peter's Place, Broad Street	1	9		
156	St. Saviour's, Alum Road, Saltley	8	3		
157	St. Silas' C.E., St Silas Square	19	9		
158	St. Thomas C.E., Granville Street	1	22	8.30 - 4.30	
159	St. Vincent's R.C., Ashten Row	7	13		
160	Stanville Road, Sheldon	26	12		
161	Starbank Road, Small Heath	10	7		
162	Station Road, Aston	6	15		
163	Station Road, Harborne	17	11		
164	Stechford, Albert Road	33	10		
165	Stechford Road, Washwood Heath	34	2		
166	Steward Street	18	51	8.30 - 4.45	
167	Stirchley Street, Pershore Road	30	13		
168	Stratford Road County Primary, Sparkbrook	11	4	8.30 - 4.45	
169	Tedbury Crescent	23	6		
170	Tilton Road (+)	9	64	8.30 - 6.00	
171	Tinkers Farm Road	31	29	8.30 - 4.30	
172	Tiverton Road, Bournbrook (-)	29	7	8.30 - 4.30	

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
173	Trescott Road	31	52	8.30 - 6.00	
174	Turfpits Lane	23	5		
175	Turves Green	31	2		
176	Twickenham Road	22c	17	8.30 - 4.30	
177	Upper Thomas Street	6	7		
178	Vicarage Road, Aston (-)	6	34		
179	Watville Road, Handsworth	21	14	8.30 - 5.00	
180	Weoley Castle R.C.	29	2		
181	Westminster Road, Handsworth	20	8		
182	Wheelers Lane, Kings Heath	13	6		
183	Whittington Oval, Yardley (-)	33	3	8.30 - 4.30	
184	Windsor Street	7	8		
185	Woodhouse Road	32	0		
186	Yardley Road, Acocks Green	27	10		
187	Yardley Wood, School Road	14	36	8.30 - 5.00	
188	Yardley Wood R.C., Trittiford Road	13	7		
189	Yarnfield Road, Tyseley	11	13		
190	York Road, Hall Green	28	0		
	Children under five on school roll		2306		

Additional Nursery Schools or Nursery Classes managed by Birmingham LEA as at July 1944

	School	Area Code	Number of children on roll under age of five	Opening hours weekdays	Opening hours Saturdays
191	Albert Road, Aston	6		9.00 - 4.30	
192	Erdington Children's Homes	23		8.30 - 5.30	
193	Garrison Lane	9		8.30 - 5.30	
194	Grove Lane, Handsworth	21		8.15 - 5.30	
195	Kingsvale	44		8.30 - 5.00	
196	Nechells, Elliot Street	7		8.30 - 5.00	

1

Nursery classes
Already in existence (+)
Projected (-)

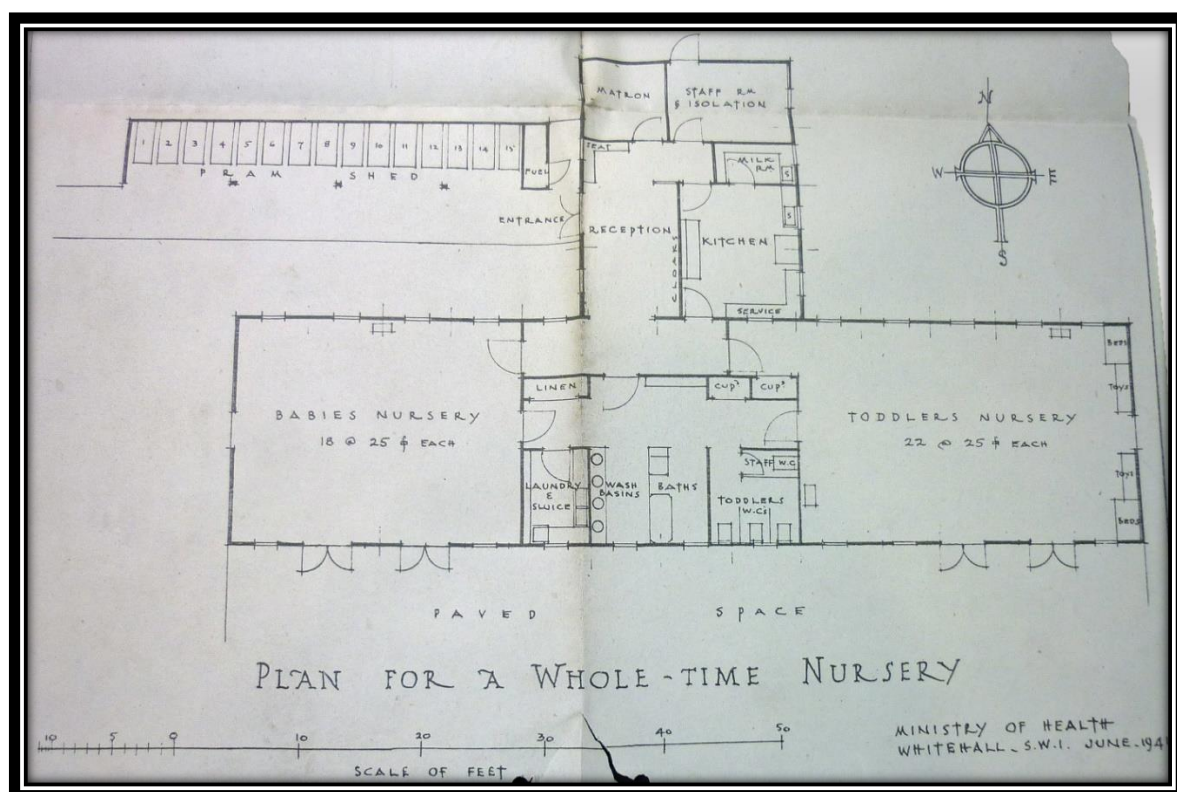
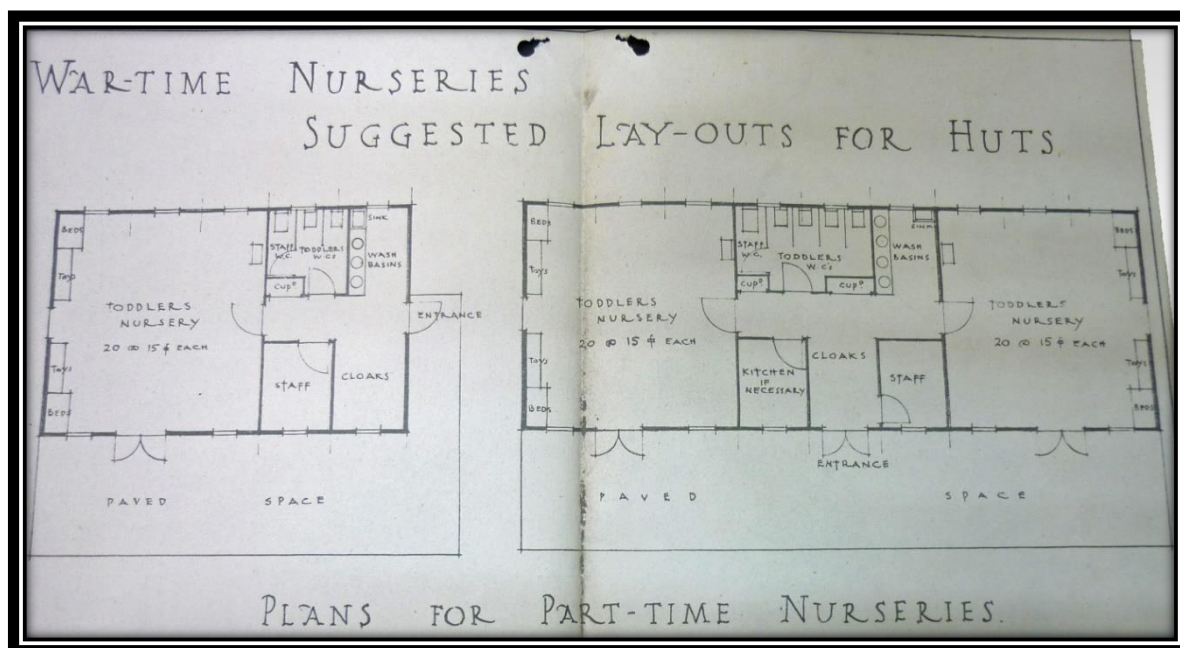
Whether or not plans were in place for schools to accept under-fives, it appears that they were on the registers by April 1942.

¹ Compiled by the author from data taken from LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945; TNA, CAB102/776, Cabinet Office, Provision of Nurseries; Kelly's Directories Limited, *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham (with its suburbs) and Smethwick* (Birmingham, 1939).

Identified Birmingham wartime factory nurseries

1	Morris Commercial Cars Limited, based at Practising School of the Saltley Training College, Bridge Street, Saltley, 8
2	Fort Dunlop, Erdington, 24 (Based in the centre of Bromford Lane, Chester Road/Wood Lane & Bromford Railway Line)

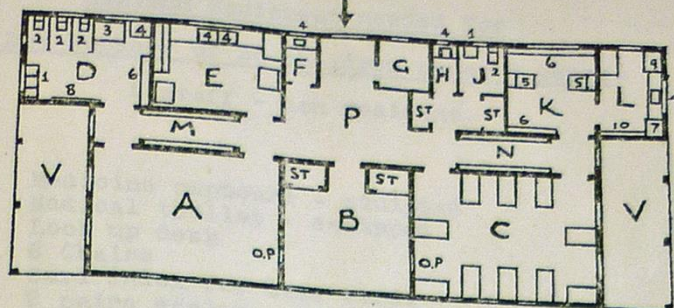
¹ Compiled by the author from data taken from *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*, 'Birmingham's First Factory Nursery' (November 26, 1941), p. 4; LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/2/1/1/31-37, Birmingham Elementary Education Sub-Committee Minutes, 1939-1945 (November 19, 1942).

Lay-out suggestions for hutments, c. 1940-1941¹

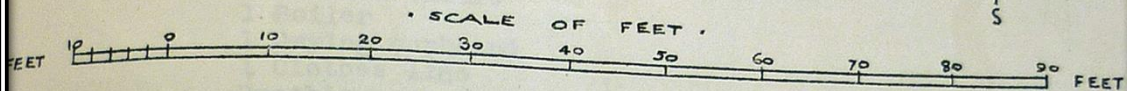
¹ LSE Library, BAEC 13/1-3, Nursery School Association, TNA, T161 1190/1, Treasury, Suggested plans for part-time and whole-time hutments.

DAY NURSERIES • SUGGESTED TYPE PLANS •

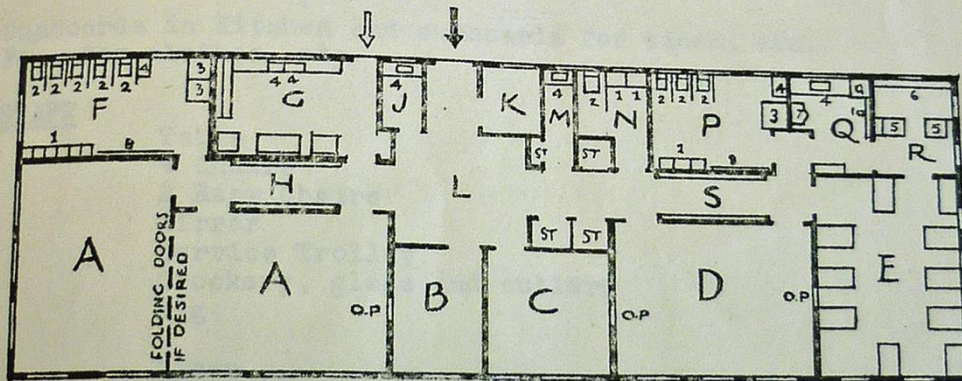
UNIT FOR TWENTY CHILDREN



A	NURSERY 20'x15' 10 OVER 2'S	K	INFANTS BATHS
B	MATRON AND. STAFF	L	LAUNDRY RM
C	NURSERY 20'x15' 10 UNDER 2'S	M	STRETCHERS
D	CHILDRENS BATHS & LAVATORY	N	CHILDRENS CLOTHES
E	KITCHEN	P	WAITING HALL
F	MILK ROOM	V	VERANDAH
G	ISOLATION	ST	STORE
H	HOUSEMAIDS CUPBOARD	O.P.	OBSERVATION PANEL
J	STAFF LAVATORY		



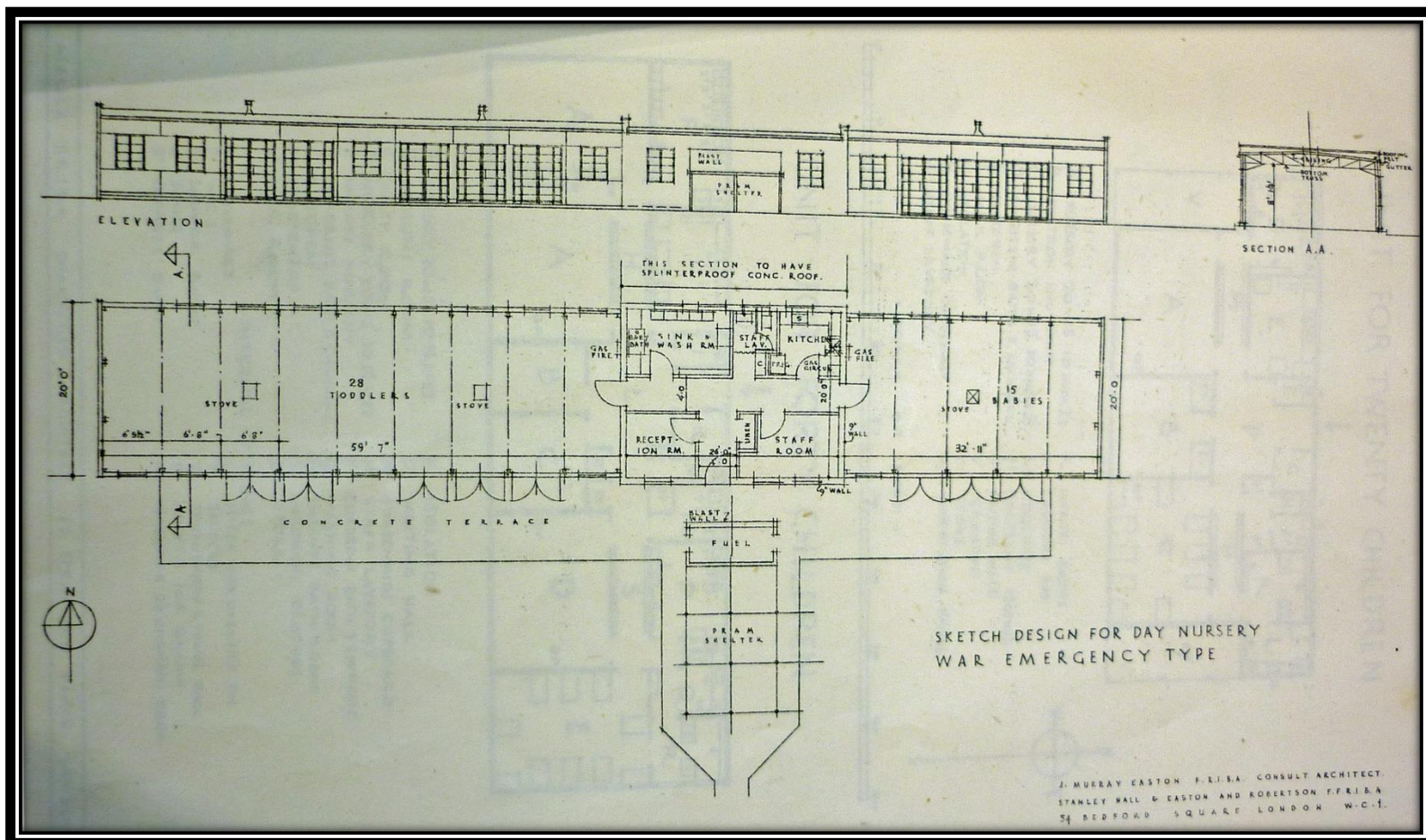
UNIT FOR FORTY CHILDREN



A	NURSERY 20'x15' 10 PLACES	K	ISOLATION
B	MATRON'S ROOM	L	WAITING HALL
C	STAFF ROOM	M	HOUSEMAIDS CUPBOARD
D	NURSERY 20'x15' 10 PLACES	N	STAFF LAVATORY
E	INFANTS NURSERY	P	CHILDRENS BATH & CHANGING
F	CHILDRENS BATH & CHANGING	Q	WASHING ROOM
G	KITCHEN	R	INFANTS BATH ROOM
H	STRETCHERS	S	CHILDRENS CLOTHES
J	MILK ROOM	ST	STORE

INTERNAL FITTINGS •

1	LAVATORIES	6	SHELF FOR UTENSILS ETC
2	W.C.S	7	SLUICES
3	SHOWER. BATHS	8	TOOTHBRUSH & TOWEL RACK
4	SINKS	9	COPPER FOR BOILING
5	INFANTS BATHS	10	SHELVING OR CHAMBER RACK



Design in Education: Being an exhibit of material for use in elementary schools, January, 1937

A brochure designed to accompany this exhibition includes a section describing each of the displays. To supplement the nursery school exhibit (Figure 7.6) prepared by Birmingham Education Authority, P D Innes, local Chief Education Officer, wrote the following which is reproduced in its entirety and provides an indication of the thought process at the time:

The approach to beauty cannot be stimulated at too early an age in the life of a child. While in the Nursery School period the appeal of beautiful things is largely unconscious, it is none the less apparent and significant and an effort has therefore been made in this Section to collect together materials which will not only introduce the child to school activities, but will also make some impression upon his mind from an æsthetic aspect.

It has been considered desirable to limit the material in order to show one particular aspect of the work in the reception classroom of a modern Infants' Elementary School, this being as it were the bridge between the Informal Nursery School activities and the formal work of the infant classroom. The activities in such a classroom are in the majority play activities, singing games, and the traditional store of rhymes and stories. Hence the equipment is largely of nursery type – a play-house, toys, picture books, with some Montessori apparatus, bricks, puzzles, and so on. The informality of the arrangement reflects the kind of way in which children would make use of the equipment in such a classroom.

In the space available for exhibition, it has not been possible to illustrate equipment for all the activities of a reception classroom, e.g., practical training in hygiene is not represented.

Furniture, toys and apparatus have been carefully selected in order that they should be at once of real educational value for four to five-year-old children, of sound material and workmanship and beautiful in form and colour. Infant schools to-day aim at placing the children in a building where they have fresh air and sunshine, with space for the free activities of childhood, and at providing abundance of play material in a happy atmosphere of beauty and joy.

Some attempt has been made to treat the background by the use of suitable decoration, in order to provide a more direct approach to the æsthetic sense.¹

¹ LOB, Archives and Collections, BCC/1/BH/D/1/1/3/1, Box 30, File 10, Exhibition of Materials for use in Elementary Schools.

Items used in the Birmingham Education Committee's display at the 'Design in education' exhibition, London – January, 1937²

		£.	s.	d.
1	Climbing gate		12	6
4	Floor mats	1	0	0
1	K. G. Table		17	6
1	K. G. Chair		8	6
1	Sand table	3	10	0
1	Table and			
2	Chairs	1	17	6
1	Stool		1	6
1	Dresser		12	0
1	Teaset		1	0
1	Teddy bear		5	0
1	Other soft sitting animal		3	0
	Clothes pegs and basket		1	0
1	Doll for bed (in nightgown)		5	0
1	Mattress and pillow		8	0
2	Boats		1	2
2	Floating toys		4	0
	Gardening tools		6	11
1	Pail and watering-pan		1	11
1	Sorting board		2	0
	Books	1	10	0
1	Bowl		2	6
	Irons		1	0
1	Cookery set		2	0
	Pattypans			6
1	Horse for riding or teddy	2	0	0
	Scales		2	0
	Farm animals		4	0
	Wooden houses		3	0
	Plasticine and board		3	6
1	Abbatt puzzle		6	9
1	Drum and bells		10	0
1	Wooden engine		6	3
	Floor Bricks		5	0
1	Biggish Soft Animal		8	0
1	Big ball		2	0
	Fitting together shapes -)			
	Omnia)		3	11
1	Montessori tower		5	9
	Montessori cylinders		10	6
	Tower of rings		4	0
	Montessori insets		19	6
1	Truck of bricks		5	0
	Wooden wheels		6	3
	Threading beads		4	0
	Pictures	3	0	0
	H. G. Wells floor bricks	1	5	0
	Sub-total	24	8	11
	For possible additional material		11	1
	Total	25	0	0

² Ibid. (June 18, 1936).

**Summary of M. E. McLaughlin's Birmingham nursery health survey
results, 1944-1945**

1. *The average weight of children* under 2 years of age attending day nurseries was consistently less than that of the children living in their own homes, but from 2 years onwards the average weight of nursery children increased more rapidly and finally exceeded that of the home group of children.
2. *The general condition*, as recorded from the clinical impression, was inferior in nursery children under 2 years old to that of children of the same age living in their own homes.
3. *The incidence of respiratory tract infections*, including acute and subacute infections present at examination and chronic conditions such as mouth-breathing and chronic tonsillar and cervical gland enlargements, was from two to eight times greater in nursery children than among those living at home. This excess was manifest at all ages and in every season.
4. *A significantly higher incidence of specific infectious fevers* occurred in the nursery group, and the epidemic occurrence of measles was more marked than in the home group. Among those children 'presumed susceptible' in the nursery group, the incidence of measles was four times greater than in those 'presumed susceptible' in the home group.
5. *Poor posture, genu valgum and pes valgus* occurred more often in the nursery group than in the home group.¹

¹ McLaughlin, M. E., 'The Physical Health of Children Attending Day Nurseries', part II, *The British Medical Journal* (May 10, 1947), pp. 631-634. Genu valgum (commonly called 'knock knee'). Pes valgus is considered to be caused by the collapse of the medial longitudinal arch in the foot.

Board of Education, Circular 1599, Childcare Reserve Courses, July 1942

Transcribed from original circular

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SYLLABUS for a course of instruction for the CHILD CARE RESERVE (Junior Section) prepared by the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare and approved by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education.

(Note: For information as to the conduct of Child Care Reserve Courses reference should be made to the Board's Circular No. 1599, dated 17th July, 1942, and its Appendix.)

JUNIOR COURSE

A course of 12 lectures, to be followed by 50 hours' practical work, for Nursery Helpers from 16 to 18 years of age.

1. **INTRODUCTORY.** (*Course Tutor.*)
Why we need War Time Nurseries. What the child misses through the absence of the Mother, e.g. her individual care, personal contact, breast feeding and family relationships.
The making of a friendly and interesting home for the children. The planning and care of it.
2. **THE CARE OF THE DAY AND NIGHT NURSERY ROOMS.** (*Nurse or Teacher.*)
Dusting and sweeping. Making the rooms attractive for the children.
Arrangement and care of furniture.
Arrangement and care of flowers.
Arrangement and choice of pictures.
Arrangement of books and toys.
Demonstration and practical work.
3. **MEALS.** (*Domestic Science Teacher.*)
Helping the cook in the kitchen with the preparation of meals.
Preparation of vegetables.
Making of rusks, soup, milk puddings.
Washing up. Importance of this - why hot water is essential, particularly for cups and spoons.
Care of the Larder - cleanliness, covering of food, with special attention to milk - ventilation - reason for wire gauze covering at the window.
Disposal of waste.
4. **CARE OF THE BABY:** How he grows from birth to 2 years. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)
Helplessness and dependence.
Rapid development physically and mentally: -

Kicking, gripping; supporting head.
 Noticing people and objects, smiling, crowing.
 Weight doubled at six months.
 Teething.
 Further stages of development: -
 Pulling himself up, standing, learning to walk, clambering and running.
 Babbling and learning to talk, curiosity.
 Need for fresh things to handle and for opportunities to explore surroundings.

5. CARE OF THE BABY: What the Baby needs. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)
 Food. Natural feeding and why it is best. Substitution by artificial feeding in Nursery; care of bottles and teats.
 Sleep. Importance of undisturbed sleep to child's growth.
 Warmth. Fresh air. Sunshine (danger of excess).
 Space.
 Freedom of movement. Suitable clothing.
 Encouragement of activity. Toys.
 Friendly relationship with helper (talking, singing, occasional nursing) and plenty of fun.
6. CARE OF THE BABY. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)
 Bathing the baby. How to get everything ready and cleared away.
 Cot making. Suitable bedding.
 Ventilation in day and night nurseries (avoidance of draughts).
 Washing and care of baby's belongings: Woollies, brushes and combs, nappies and pots.
 Demonstration and practical work: Bathing baby or doll.
7. THE CHILD AS HE GROWS OLDER. (*Teacher.*)
 How to keep him happy and help him to grow.
 Play. Fresh air and exercise. Sunlight – its uses and abuses.
 Play in the nursery – the variety he likes.
 Play in the garden – how to make the garden interesting, e.g. use of big toys; digging.
 How to make walks interesting – why they must be purposeful and short.
 How to improvise toys. How to keep toys properly – storage to prevent breakages.
 How play runs through a child's life, e.g. through his talking, pretending, "working," at bath times and dressing time.
 What makes for a good day in the child's life – regularity and variety, freedom and control, kindly handling and understanding.
 Demonstration and visit to Nursery.
8. THE CHILD'S NEED FOR OTHER CARE. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)
 Bathing and washing time – the child's share in it - what he learns.
 Arrangements for towels. Care of the bathroom. Dressing - the child's share in it.
 Time to be allowed for this.
 Bed time and Rest time. Bed making. How the children can help with the preparation of rest time.

Care of hair and nails. How to recognise head lice and nits.
Care of the children's clothes.
Visits to the lavatory - how the child learns to help himself. Care of lavatories.
Washing of soiled knickers.

9. MEAL TIMES. (*Teacher.*)

The share taken by children and helpers. What the children can learn - to lay a table, wait on each other, pleasant eating habits, to enjoy adventure in new kinds of food. The importance of well balanced meals.

How to serve food; serving plates daintily; various kinds of food served so that children realise what they are eating, e.g. carrot, potatoes separate.

10 and 11. THE HELPERS. (*Teacher.*)

How they can use their own special gifts in the service of the children, e.g. music, playing of pipe, violin, piano - simple dancing tunes for Nursery Rhymes - singing and playing to the children. Use of drum and tambourine for dancing.

Gardening - how to make a children's garden. Interest in the kitchen garden; what to grow - flowers, mustard and cress, radishes. How to make flower gardens in tubs; growing things in the Nursery. How to care for flowers in the Nursery. Interest in countryside and knowledge of animals and their ways; wild flowers, trees, sky, streams, fish.

Sewing. Making and mending clothes - making appliques for blankets, etc.

Woodwork. Making and mending toys.

Drawing. Making symbols for pegs.

Printing curtains for shelves.

Making scrap books. Helping children to enjoy drawing.

Reading. Stories for children.

Suggestions for following up students' special interests, e.g. evening classes. As far as possible students should choose the development of certain interests - perhaps three or four subjects.

Demonstrations and practical work.

12. REVISION. A survey of the content of the Course. (*Course tutor.*)

What the child nearing the age of 5 has gained from the Nursery, e.g. -

- (i) is strong and vigorous, can run and climb fearlessly;
- (ii) sleeps soundly and eats suitable food with enjoyment;
- (iii) can use his hands skilfully in the use of many materials (bricks, clay, scissors, mop);
- (iv) is friendly and can look after himself with confidence (washing, going to the lavatory);
- (v) talks fluently and clearly;
- (vi) is cheerful, responsive and ready to meet new adventures;
- (vii) is helpful and knows something of the joy of sharing.

Nursery Films. (Films of Chelsea and Mile End Nursery Schools obtainable from Nursery School Association.)

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SYLLABUS for a course of instruction for the CHILD CARE RESERVE (Senior Section) prepared by the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare and approved by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education.

(Note: For information as to the conduct of Child Care Reserve Courses reference should be made to the Board's Circular No. 1599, dated 17th July, 1942, and its Appendix.)

SENIOR COURSE

A course of 20 lectures, to be followed by 50 hours' practical work, for prospective Nursery Assistants over 18 years of age.

1. THE WAR-TIME NURSERY. Introductory Lecture. (*Course Tutor.*)
Its place in the community.
How war-time conditions affect the child through evacuation and employment of mothers. Consideration of the difficulties from the mothers' point of view.
What the child will miss in family relationships and the extent to which we can compensate for this.
The value of keeping in touch with the children's homes, both from the helper's and the child's point of view; in the residential nurseries by encouraging visits from the parents and by giving them a welcome; in the day nurseries by getting to know the parents or friends and through them something of the home conditions.
The need for a child to feel safe, welcome, and confident of his mother's return.
The importance of every worker in the nursery contributing towards the children's well being – whether cook, gardener, cleaner, assistant, voluntary worker, doctor, teacher or nurse.
2. THE CARE OF DAY AND NIGHT NURSERIES. (*Nurse or Teacher.*)
 - (a) Adequate ventilation.
 - (b) Warmth and cosiness; need for fireguards.
 - (c) Cleanliness of rooms and furniture. Dusting and sweeping. Washing of furniture.
 - (d) Making and keeping the rooms attractive, with existing furniture. Arrangement of furniture according to size and shape of the room, size of furniture, age of children, and by making the most of available space. Arrangement of flowers in vases. Growing of seeds and bulbs. Arrangement of pictures - choice, number, placing. Arrangement of toys and books.
 - (e) General care of all equipment.
Discussion of above topics.
Class work: making up of cot and bed.
Visits to a Nursery.

3. MEALS. (*Domestic Science Teacher.*)

- (a) Diet. Elementary principles, explaining foods required to protect health, for growth, for energy and for warmth.

Definition of the terms protein and vitamin.

Well balanced meals.

The special importance to growing children of protein, of fresh vegetables and of food requiring mastication, and of plenty of water.

- (b) Preparation of food, e.g. the making of rusks and soup, preparation of salads and vegetables.

- (c) Washing up. Importance of this. Why hot water is essential, particularly for cups and spoons.

- (d) Care of Larder. Cleanliness. Covering of food, with special attention to milk. Ventilation. Wire gauze over window.

- (e) Disposal of waste. Covered out-door bins. Frequent collection.

Class work: practical work in Domestic Science centre, studying and making up simple menus.

4. THE GROWTH OF THE CHILD UP TO TWO YEARS. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

- (a) 0 – 9 months. Helplessness and dependence of the child on the Mother.

Early muscular activity: -

- (i) Kicking, arm movements.
- (ii) Gripping, first with one hand, then with both.
- (iii) Supporting head.
- (iv) Pulling himself up into sitting position.

Awakening of interest: -

- (i) Noticing people and objects.
 - (ii) Smiling, crowing.
 - (iii) Curiosity (joy in discovering paper can be torn, etc.).
- Rapid physical development – weight doubled at 6 months.
Teething. Use of bone ring and rusks.

- (b) 9 months - 2 years.

Sequence in which baby teeth erupt.

Further stages of muscular development: -

- (i) Pulling himself up on his feet.
 - (ii) Crawling.
 - (iii) Standing.
 - (iv) Learning to walk.
 - (v) Clambering and running.
- Expansion of interest through: -
- (i) Babbling and learning to talk.
 - (ii) Contact with older children and grown-ups.
 - (iii) Fresh things to handle and suitable toys.
 - (iv) Exploring his surroundings.

Class demonstration: suitable clothing allowing for growth. Suitable toys.

Visit to Infant Welfare Centre and study of correct method of weighing and of weight charts.

5 and 6. CARE OF THE CHILD UP TO TWO YEARS. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

(a) The importance of mothering:-

Feeding

Sleep – the need of enough undisturbed sleep for children in war-time nurseries.

Warmth - clothing, freedom of movement and muscular activity.

Bathing, changing and habit training.

Cleanliness.

Space indoors and out.

Fresh air and light - danger of exposure to excessive heat and sunlight.

Comfort and happiness - friendly relationship with helpers, talking, singing and occasional nursing. [Crying may be due to discomfort, hunger, loneliness.]

Play with toys.

Safety - use of fireguards, window bars, pram hoods, etc.

(b) Daily Routine: -

Regular feeding.

Changing.

Hours of sleep.

Bathing and dressing.

Playtime.

Class Demonstrations:-

Washing of woollens and napkins.

Bathing a baby if possible; if not, a “model” doll.

Film (if possible) showing washing and dressing of a baby.

7. THE FEEDING OF THE CHILD TO FIVE YEARS. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

The substitution in a war-time nursery of artificial feeding for the ideal of breast feeding.

The simple principles of artificial feeding from the bottle on to solid food.

Simple principles of weaning.

(a) Gradual introduction of solid foods, with longer intervals between meals.

(b) Education in taste and mastication.

Feeding 1-5 years. Variety, food requiring mastication, fresh vegetables, fruit juices. The importance of milk in a child's diet.

Class work: Making up a feed. Washing of bottles and teats. Care of milk.

8. MANAGEMENT OF MEAL TIMES. (*Teacher.*)

The share taken by children and helpers.

What the children can learn - laying a table, waiting on each other, pleasant eating habits, enjoyment of adventure in new kinds of food. The importance of well balanced meals.

Food to be served daintily so that the children are encouraged to eat tidily, and can realise the variety of food on their plates, e.g. carrots, potatoes etc.

The arrangement of the children's tables.

Advisability of small groups, e.g. four or six at a table.

Recognition of the differences in the children's appetites. How to encourage slow eaters.

Special consideration for the children who are learning to feed themselves, with particular reference to the child from one to two years.

Mealtimes a pleasant social occasion.

Class work: a visit to a nursery, to include dinner time.

9, 10 and 11. PLAY. (*Teacher.*)

1. The child's natural need for play and how it helps him to grow physically strong, mentally alert, balanced and friendly.

2. The adult's share in children's play.

(a) Recognition of the whole day as giving opportunities for play. Incidental play not only for set periods, e.g. at bath time, dressing time, walks, etc. Appreciation of the child's fun and sense of humour, and also of his need for opportunities for quiet play.

(b) The choice of play material. The need for simplicity, variety, improvisation, and adaption of scrap material.

Play for babies. Muscular activity, objects to grasp and shake, and push and pull, e.g. hard and soft toys. Pans, jars with tops, boxes, balls.

Play for older children, e.g. water, sand earth, clay. Paints, crayons, wood, bricks. Dolls, dolls' beds, etc. Simple dressing-up clothes.

Beads. Sorting games, shells, stones, chestnuts, acorns, leaves, geometrical shapes, sticks, etc. Fitting-in toys, jigsaw puzzles, etc.

Alternative uses by children of specially prepared toy materials and things in their environment, e.g. steps, short ladders, simple furniture, boxes, logs, planks, rope.

(c) Provision for play which satisfies muscular needs, intellectual development (experiment, manipulation, and construction).

(d) The need for expression and make-believe.

(e) Need for social opportunities - individual play, the beginnings of group play as seen in home play, building, etc.

(f) Sharing the children's play. The importance, on occasion, of introducing the child to new material, of recognising by friendly talk the efforts of the child, of playing beside the child, and of not interfering unnecessarily.

(g) The care of play materials.

Need for orderliness - suitable shelving and careful placing.

Need for frequent checking by the helper.

Need for cleanliness.

Need for repairs.

Class work: Each student to make a toy from waste material during the course.

Visits to nurseries for observation of children's play at different stages of development. Exhibition of play material, with discussions as to its suitability.

12. MUSIC. (*Teacher.*)

The child's interest in sound. How it develops through listening, rhythmic movement and singing.

(a) Movement.

For the baby, tapping, clapping, rocking; for the older child, free movement to the ring of a tambourine, to the beat of a drum, to rhythm played on a pipe, violin or piano, to the helper's singing. Simple dancing, and for the older children some simple musical games.

(b) Singing.

(i) By the helper to all the children. Traditional nursery rhymes, lullabies, simple folk tunes.

(ii) By the older children, as above, with finger plays, simple "thank you" songs.

Class work: Songs suitable for children to be learnt. Useful books to be seen.

13. LANGUAGE. (*Teacher.*)

The importance of the development of speech.

How children learn from birth onwards by hearing talk, through babbling and gurgling, experimenting with words and sentences, and through practicing speech; through being listened to by adults and by constant opportunities for talking, e.g. when dressing, washing, meal times, and in their play.

The children's enjoyment in rhymes, jingles, pictures and stories. How to select these for children two, three and four years of age.

Class work: Discussions on suitable stories and pictures.

14. THE CHILD'S USE OF A GARDEN. (*Teacher.*)

(a) Interest in flowers, birds, insects, worms; how to further the children's curiosity and develop friendly feeling towards various forms of life.

Kitchen garden where children can see vegetables, salads, etc. growing.

Flower garden as something for the children and helpers to protect.

(b) The children's love of adventure and skill. The use of improvised and natural play material for climbing, balancing (gates, fences, logs, boxes, low walls).

Digging for the sake of digging in some selected place.

Use of a converted tool shed or other suitable place as play-house.

(c) Sleeping in the garden.

(d) Meals in the garden.

Discussion: The child's interest in the countryside. How to take walks with the children. How to make playgrounds interesting.

15. PHYSICAL CARE OF THE OLDER CHILD. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

(i) Child Hygiene.

Share taken by helpers and children. What the children can learn to do for themselves at different ages.

(a) Bathing and washing. Arrangements for individual towels and flannels, their spacing and drying.

(b) Tooth cleaning. Need for supervision, care of tooth brushes.

(c) Hair. Frequent inspection, recognition of head lice and nits, cleansing, care of brushes and combs.

(d) Prevalence of "running noses" in the nurseries, and the importance of individual handkerchiefs (use of soft paper and clean rag).

- (e) Lavatory.
- (f) Care of children's clothes and footgear.

(2) First Aid. How to treat: -

Cuts, bruises, scalds, burns, foreign bodies. Immediate treatment of shock, concussion, convulsions, choking.

Class work: Treatment of dirty heads, washing brushes, combs, tooth brushes.

Some bandaging. Making hot fomentations.

16. HOW TO KEEP THE NURSERY FREE FROM INFECTION. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

(a) Scrupulous cleanliness.

Personal hygiene of the helper.

Care of all personal belongings.

Importance of clean dishes, utensils, clothes, chambers, etc.

Importance of clean rooms, furniture and toys.

Dusting, sweeping and washing.

(b) Fresh air and sunshine.

Ventilation - value of cross ventilation.

Difficulties arising from black out arrangements.

Open-air life - stimulating effect mentally and physically.

(c) Adequate spacing, with particular reference to dormitories.

Consideration of acceptable standards.

Class work: Study of arrangements for hanging towels and methods of ventilation. Sun canopies and how to improvise. Scrubbing stretcher beds.

17. THE AILING CHILD. (*Doctor or Nurse.*)

The place of the Doctor and Nurse in the group.

Early detection and reporting. The need of observation and reporting by the helper of any unusual symptoms, e.g. cough, vomiting, rash, sore throat, discharging ears, noses, abnormal stools.

Temporary isolation.

How to avoid carrying infection from the sick room; why this is important.

Making the sick room cheerful.

Use of clinical thermometer; normal body temperature.

Class work: The washing of utensils, crockery, baths, chambers, and napkins of sick children.

18. THE MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN. (*Teacher.*)

Good relationships between children and adults as a foundation.

The importance of understanding children at different ages, and the part the adult must take in helping them to grow towards good social behaviour.

What the child expects of the grown-up - dependability and self-control; the necessary restraint of the child's uncontrolled behaviour. Reasonable opportunities for the exercise of the child's power of choice.

The part played by a well-arranged programme, good physical care, suitably selected toys, and other provision for play.

The importance of a balance being kept between the child's desire for independent behaviour (washing, putting away toys, etc.), and his lack of skill which makes help necessary.

The child's sense of time - his need to think and move at his own pace, undue hurrying leading to exasperation. Need to give him warning that play-time is nearly over, etc.

The child's need for individual play with self-chosen companions, and for organised group play (music and stories).

The child's possible bewilderment and strain when living in a large group; the effect of this in his behaviour - outbursts of rage, depression, fretfulness. The consideration of space in this connection.

19. THE CHILDREN'S DAY. (*Teacher.*)

Specially thoughtful care for the reassurance of the child on arrival at the nursery, and the need for play, stories, etc. to continue after tea until he goes home.

Value of simple routine to the child in both day and residential nurseries.

The nursery setting and the making of programmes based on children's needs: -
Arrival of children.

Ample time for various play activities.

Meal times.

Sleep times.

Washing and potting times.

Class work: Making specimen programmes for children. Need for careful planning according to length of nursery day, e.g. 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. or 8.30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

20. REVISION. A survey of the content of the Course. (*Course Tutor.*)

What a child of nearly five has gained from the nursery, e.g. he is strong and vigorous, can run and climb fearlessly, sleeps soundly, eats suitable food with enjoyment, can use his hands skilfully in the use of many materials (bricks, scissors, clay, mops). He is helpful, and knows something of the joy of sharing. He is friendly, and can look after himself with confidence (washing, going to the lavatory, dressing), is cheerful and responsive and ready to meet new adventures.

Class work: Film of a Nursery School and a Nursery for children from 0 – 5 years.

Exhibition of toys made by the students.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SYLLABUS for a course of instruction for the CHILD CARE RESERVE (Supplementary Section) prepared by the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare and approved by the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education.

(Note: For information as to the conduct of Child Care Reserve Courses reference should be made to the Boards Circular No. 1599, dated 17th July, 1942, and its Appendix.)

SUPPLEMENTARY COURSE

A course of 20 lectures for prospective Wardens of Wartime Nurseries or Nursery Classes.

1. THE ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN.

Importance of uniform all-round development.

How physical, intellectual, emotional and social development contribute to the whole of a child's personality. The sensitiveness of a child to his surroundings. What the child needs in his environment - understanding and friendliness, warm cosy rooms, space, order and freedom, good food, etc.

The care of the children as the purpose of every worker in the Nursery - the responsibility of the Warden in this connection.

2. MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT.

The helplessness of a baby and the skill of a five-year-old.

Muscular development from babyhood to five years.

How we can best help progress towards balance, control and skill.

Need for opportunities for activity indoors and out - e.g. for the babies, sitting up, stretching, crawling; for the older children, running, climbing, balancing, singing, dancing, pushing and pulling suitable toys.

The connection between muscular development and the development of effort.

3. INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT.

The beginnings of thinking in the baby, e.g. memory, the liveliness of his senses and how he learns through them (sound of voices, differences in texture, sight of his feed, observation of his surroundings).

The lively, varied and logical thinking of the five-year-old as seen in his play and as evident from his talk. The value of interesting surroundings and play materials and the need for speech experience.

The encouragement of speech development in children, e.g. through hearing speech, talking, hearing and saying rhymes, singing and through stories.

4. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

The characteristics of a baby's feelings in response to his experiences.

His showing of pleasure and displeasure. His normal contentment.

The strength of his feelings and his inability to control them.

The more controlled expression of feeling in the five-year-old along with a variety and liveliness of response to his many experiences, e.g. joy in finding fresh things to do, in mastering difficulties. His growth towards stability and balance as seen in his ability to tolerate difficulty, disappointment and interference from other children. How sensitiveness in a young child includes both sensitiveness to pleasure and the possibility of being upset, e.g. as seen in temper tantrums. The need for the careful handling of outbursts of temper, and the child's need for the kind of restraint he will find helpful.

How the child's need for security is affected by sudden changes and how normal "mothering" helps him through these experiences, e.g. when he first comes to the Nursery; the value of visits from the child's own mother, particularly in evacuated nurseries.

How to play with the simplest materials can help him.

5. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The dependence of the baby on his mother, and his responsiveness to her. His limited relationships at this stage.

The self-reliance of the five-year-old. His co-operative behaviour, his increasing friendliness and his varied friendships. His pleasure in being helpful and in sharing, e.g. waiting at the table, taking "fair" turns with favourite toys, mopping up spills, helping with the younger children.

The importance in the nursery of courtesy and consideration in the grown-ups towards one another and the children.

The opportunities given by nursery life for fostering social behaviour, e.g. play, singing and dancing, tidying up, washing and dressing, reasonable obedience.

6. PLAY.

How play is as essential to the child's full development as sleep and food.

(a) The baby's need for play, e.g. when being bathed and dressed.

Being given toys to shake and bang. Soft and hard toys, etc.

(b) How the older child is helped by play with

- i) sand, water, clay, paint, chalks, wood and nails and bricks;
- ii) dolls, household play, and dressing up;
- iii) logs, boxes, planks, pushing toys;
- iv) beads, jigsaws, fitting toys, paste and scissors;
- v) pebbles, shells, leaves, beans.

The child's normal progress from manipulation to construction, from unco-ordinated to skilful movement, and from haphazard to purposeful use of these varied materials.

The lasting value of some of these materials, e.g. clay, paint, wood.

(Each student should make a toy during the course.)

7. CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR.

How to help the child through difficult patches in his behaviour.

The importance of understanding difficult behaviour as showing need for help, e.g. timidity, shyness, troublesomeness.

Simple forms of difficult behaviour.

(a) tantrums, disobedience, pinching, biting, etc.

(b) loneliness, dreaminess, sulkiness, idleness, romancing.

- (c) thumb-sucking, feeding and cleanliness difficulties, stammering, nightmares and fears.

How the grown-up helps through building up the child's sense of his own value, and in some cases through necessary restraint.

How the child helps himself through his play.

8. A. MUSIC

The child's interest in sound.

How music in his background enriches his experience and has permanent value for him

How it develops through listening, through free rhythmic movement and through singing.

- (a) Movement for the baby - tapping, clapping, rocking. For older children free movement to the ring of a tambourine, to the beat of a drum, to the rhythm played on a pipe, violin or piano, and to the helper's singing.

Simple dancing, and for the older children some simple musical games. by the helper to all the children – traditional nursery rhymes, lullabies, simple folk tunes;

- (i) by the older children as above, with finger play and simple "thank you" songs.

B. LANGUAGE.

The importance of the development of speech for intellectual, emotional and social development.

How children learn – through experience of speech, and much practice.

The children's enjoyment in rhymes, jingles, stories. Selection of those that are suitable for children of 2, 3 and 4 and 5 years of age.

The importance of clear, pleasant speech in the grown-ups.

CHILD HYGIENE

Note: It should be borne in mind that Wardens of Nursery Classes or Wartime Nurseries for children between the ages of 2 and 5, where there may be no nurse on the staff, will have special responsibility for the children's health. In nurseries under the charge of a Matron it will be understood that this aspect of the work is primarily her responsibility.

9. INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

The effect of perfect health on the whole development of the child.

How the home, the nursery and the child co-operate.

How the fundamental principles of health apply to all ages throughout life.

The foundation of health is laid in the young child.

The principles of health:

- (a) Good nutrition.
- (b) Sleep.
- (c) Fresh air and exercise.
- (d) Clean personal habits.

Each is essential and all are dependent on each other.

How the child is dependent on the grown up for a healthy environment and the extent to which he is unable to protect himself.

Value of regular medical and dental inspections.

Importance of the wise handling of a child in an emergency.

What the Wardens should know of First Aid.

Class Work: Discussion.

Observation Visit: School Medical inspection of young children.

10. GOOD NUTRITION.

Essential constituents for a balanced diet: - Fats, Proteins, Carbohydrates, Vitamins and Mineral Salts.

Caloric values - daily requirements.

How cooking and preparation of foods can affect food values.

Suitability of food for young children:

- (a) Value of milk.
- (b) Importance of food for growth - proteins and vitamins.
- (c) Digestibility.
- (d) Food requiring mastication - crusts, rusks, etc.

Common errors in diet:

- (a) Too much starch and too much sloppy food.
- (b) Insufficient fresh foods; making the most of supplies available in war-time.

Effect of wrong feeding on the young child:

- (a) On physical development, bones, muscles, teeth.
- (b) On resistance to infection.

Diet in relation to Nursery Life:

- (a) Uncertainty of the type of food provided at home.
- (b) Balance of meals at nursery - daily requirements of protein and vitamins to be provided.
- (c) Child's milk, egg, cod liver oil and fruit juice rations.
- (d) Supply of food from canteen or nursery. Importance of replacing Vitamin C destroyed in transport.
- (e) Discussion: Planning of suitable menus with a view to variety.

Observation Visits: School canteen, nursery school or class, or war-time nursery (kitchen and preparation and serving of meals).

11. A. FRESH AIR AND EXERCISE.

Why fresh air is essential for health.

Effect on health of a stuffy close atmosphere.

Effect of sunshine on health.

Effect of lack of sunshine on animal and plant life.

(N.B. - Danger of excessive heat and sunlight.)

Correct breathing to make use of fresh air - nasal hygiene.

Exercise in relation to health and to the muscular development of growing child.

Importance of the right type of clothing for:

- (a) Ventilation.
- (b) Muscular activity.
- (c) Protection (winter, summer).
- (d) The care of the feet (importance of footgear).

B. SLEEP AND REST.

Compensation for disturbed sleep at home.

The value of sleep:

- (a) To restore mental and physical energy.
- (b) To aid growth and nutrition.
- (c) As an aid to digestion before and after meals.

Value of fresh air, cots in airy rooms or in open air.

Importance of peace, warmth and comfort.

Discussion: Planning the nursery day to give adequate fresh air, exercise, sleep and rest periods. Ventilation of the nursery, outdoor play, use of garden.

Observation visit: Open-air nursery school, if possible.

12. PERSONAL HABITS.

Need for bathing and washing.

How infection can be carried to the skin by means of:

- (a) Flannels, towels, etc.
- (b) Dirty baths and basins.
- (c) Dirty nails.
- (d) Sharing bath water.

Importance of clean clothing.

Care of the Hair:

Importance in relation to health.

Danger of head infections and lice.

How to keep the hair clean.

Frequent and careful inspection in a good light.

Combing and brushing.

Care of brushes and combs.

Care of the Teeth:

The part teeth play in maintaining health -

- (a) Digestion;
- (b) Infection

The right way and time to clean teeth. Need for supervision.

Care of toothbrushes.

Food which helps to clean the teeth.

Importance of taking care of the "baby teeth".

Care of the Nose:

How the air is cleaned and warmed in the nose.

Effect of stuffy and running noses on health of child.

- (a) Colds and spread of infection.
- (b) Risk of enlarged tonsils and adenoids through mouth breathing.
- (c) Nose blowing after sneezing and when required.
- (d) Individual handkerchiefs and how to wash them.

Lavatory Training: Its importance from every aspect of mental and physical health.

Consideration of what the child can learn to do for himself, and of the special care necessary with regard to the feelings of the children who need cleansing.

Discussion: Treatment of dirty heads. Washing of brushes and combs, tooth brushes. Arrangements for hanging towels, flannels - spacing and drying.

Arrangements for hanging outdoor clothes, shoes - spacing and drying.

Observation Visit: Cleansing station.

13. THE SUPERVISION OF HEALTH IN THE NURSERY.

A. Elementary knowledge of infectious diseases, with incubation periods.

Immunisation and vaccination.

How infection is spread:

- (a) By air - crowding, bad ventilation, large groups (e.g. the common cold and respiratory diseases, measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever).
- (b) By food and drink - milk, water, meat, watercress, etc. (e.g. dysentery, epidemic diarrhoea, typhoid).
- (c) By contact - unwashed hands, clothes, utensils, chambers, towels, toys, etc. (e.g. impetigo, scabies).
- (d) By flies - leaving food (particularly milk) uncovered and dustbins too full or uncovered (e.g. dysentery, diarrhoea).

B. *How to keep the nursery free from infection.*

(a) Fresh air and sunshine.

Ventilation - value of cross ventilation.

Difficulties arising from black-out arrangements.

Open-air life - its stimulating effects mentally and physically.

(b) Adequate spacing with particular reference to dormitories; consideration of acceptable standards.

(c) Scrupulous cleanliness.

Personal hygiene of the helper - potential source of infection.

Importance of clean dishes, utensils, clothes, chambers, toys.

Importance of clean rooms and furniture.

Care of personal belongings.

Care of larder - covering of milk, etc.

Importance of hot water for washing dishes.

Disposal of waste. Covered dust-bins.

C. *Miscellaneous.*

(a) Observation of children and helpers on arrival.

(b) Reporting of any unusual symptoms - rash, sore throat, cough, vomiting, abnormal stools, discharging ears.

(c) Isolation of suspected case till help comes.

(d) Supervision of cleanliness.

(e) Care of convalescent child - special consideration.

Discussion: Treatment of impetigo, scabies. Black-out arrangements.

Observation Visit: Immunisation clinic.

THE WARDEN'S RESPONSIBILITIES.

14. THE NURSERY.

Different types of nurseries, e.g. adapted house, hut, nursery class.

The need for homeliness, cosiness and warmth, cheeriness, orderliness, and welcoming atmosphere.

The supervision of all departments of the nursery, e.g. cooking, cleaning, arrangements for the washing of the children's clothes, etc.

The care of the garden.
The care of all equipment - beds, crockery, toys, etc.
Cleaning of nurseries.
Care of lavatories.
Arrangements for washing, bathing, and for the care of towels, etc.
Storage of beds, extra clothes, mending of clothes.
Choice and placing of pictures.

15. PLANNING THE CHILDREN'S DAY.

Need for careful planning according to length of nursery day, e.g. 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. or 8.30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Programme to allow for the best use of the children's time.

Need for simple programme which gives a balance between control and freedom, e.g. fixing of meal and rest-times as the framework of the day, deciding on a few fixed washing and lavatory times for all children - additional times to be more individual; planning for adequate play time; planning for various kinds of play; opportunities for quiet play, picture books, etc.

Discussion of above.

Short simple group activities.

The management of change-over times, e.g. from play to washing.

The taking of occasional short walks which have a purpose or goal.

Making of simple programmes for fine and wet days, winter and summer days.

16. PLANNING THE DAY FOR THE WARDEN AND HELPERS.

The importance of regarding the 8.30 - 5 period as the children's working day, which should be organised by the Warden, whatever the hours for which the nursery is open.

Programme to allow for proper care of the children and for most suitable use of members of staff, without undue fatigue for anyone.

Times in the day when the most calls are made on the whole staff, e.g. middle day period including change-over from play to washing, washing and lavatory time, dinner time, rest time (workers' own dinner time has to be allowed for).

The necessity of planning (a) a definite programme for every helper which gives variety and adequate responsibility; (b) a short break during the day for each member of the staff;

Discussion - sample programmes in relation to number of children, size of staff, washing and lavatory accommodation, number of rooms available for children, garden, etc.

17 and 18. THE WARDEN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER STAFF.

The importance of understanding the relationship of the Warden's work to that of the doctor, nurse, etc.

The unity of purpose of the whole staff. The Warden's responsibility in getting to know all the workers.

(a) *The Younger Helper.*

The importance of understanding the special need of the younger girl helper (aged 14 years and upwards) for adequate rest and variety in occupation, and the need for satisfaction in her work, e.g. through being helped to realise that

all work is of importance in the nursery; through having suitable recognition of the quality of her work; through having definite jobs, however small, for which she is responsible; through having opportunities of being with the children, as well as helping with the more domestic side of the nursery life; through being able to use any special gifts she may have. Importance for her to have additional outside interests. The great importance of the Warden's teaching by example and of giving the young helpers encouragement and confidence. The value of regular talks and discussions on the general work of the nursery. The following is suggestive of a useful basis for such talks and discussions which might be followed by demonstrations: -

(1) Simple rules of health and cleanliness:

Their own personal cleanliness and tidiness.

Why it is necessary to wash spoons and cups in very hot water.

Why it is necessary to use disinfectant for combs, hair brushes, pots, lavatories.

Why it is necessary to have clean towels, face cloths, bibs, knickers, overalls, table covers.

The use of the floor mop. How it can be kept clean and fresh.

Beds and blankets. The need for keeping them separated, aired and scrubbed when children have wet them.

(2) The children's part in looking after themselves:

Why children like to try to wash themselves, do their own hair, go to the lavatory, serve meals, lay tables. How they can be encouraged and helped in this. Praise for trying and improvement. Noting of progress of individual children.

(3) Simple directions for tidiness and looking after rooms:

A place for everything in the room, so that all know where they are.

Tidying the toys on shelves, the books, pictures, etc. when children have put them away.

Putting out the big things the children cannot handle - water, sand, clay; play-house corner; clearing up spills and messes.

Seeing windows are open, flowers in fresh water, curtains, covers, etc. freshly laundered.

See that the symbols on blankets, etc. are secure.

Taking pride in the cleanliness of dolls' clothes and beds.

Taking a pride in the washing room and lavatories, keeping them fresh and neat.

(b) *The older helper.*

The understanding of the older woman's need to feel responsible.

The importance of a friendly, tolerant attitude on the part of the Warden along with the definite understanding that she is the more responsible person in the nursery.

The value of discussing the work of the nursery and any problems concerning the children, of asking the older women for suggestions and accepting them if possible.

Selection of work according to the older woman's capabilities.

(c) *The voluntary helper.*

Need to recognise the voluntary helper's part and the contribution she is making to the life of the nursery.

The importance of making full use of any talents she may have and of giving her a definite job.

The importance for the children of regular, frequent attendances of any one helper.

The need to consider the proportion of these workers to the whole staff and to space them equally throughout the week.

Discussion. Talks with the staff as a group on the welfare of the children, e.g. planning of work, the care of individual children, on stories and music; on the making and mending of toys, "A stitch in time saves nine."

19. ADMINISTRATION.

The importance of understanding something of Local Government in relation to the Nursery.

The functions of the Welfare Authority, Local Education Authority, School Medical Service, Clinics, Voluntary Bodies.

How to contact Doctor and Nurse.

The work of a Teacher charges with the supervision of a group of nurseries.

Registers of attendance.

20. REVISION.

Giving an opportunity for discussion of topics of special interest to the group, for supplementing information already given, and for reviewing the subject matter of the Course.

Exhibition of toys made by the students.¹

¹ TNA, ED138/11, Board of Education, Circular 1599, Childcare Reserve Courses, Syllabus (July 17, 1942).

**Ministry of Health and Board of Education
suggested staffing structure for Wartime Nurseries
May, 1941**

The success of wartime nurseries depended to a large extent on the efficiency of the staff. In a nursery which admitted children of all ages up to five, the staff consisted of a Matron, Deputy Matron, Warden; assistants comprised nursery-trained nurses, members of the Child Care Reserve, probationers, and helpers, as required. In a nursery which admitted children over two, the staff normally consisted of a teacher supervising a group of nurseries, a warden, with one or more helpers. In an isolated nursery for children over two, the staff consisted of the warden with one or more helpers.

1. *Matron*. The Matron was in charge of a nursery providing for children of the full 0-5 age range, and was to be a State Registered Nurse, either general or children's.
2. *Deputy Matron*. The Deputy Matron should be similarly trained to Matrons or certificated nursery trained with some institutional experience.
3. *Superintendents and Wardens*.
 - a. Superintendent of a group of small nurseries for children over two (each of which will be under a warden);
 - b. Warden of an isolated nursery for children over two;
 - c. Warden in a nursery for children of all ages up to five.

The Superintendent was normally a fully trained certificated teacher with experience of young children, and preferably with nursery school or nursery class experience.

Wardens as in b and c could be any woman with teaching or other experience with young children which qualified her for this kind of work. In view of the shortage of qualified teachers with experience in training young children, it became necessary to employ as Wardens women who were not qualified teachers and to use qualified teachers as Superintendents of a group of Nurseries. In fact, certificated teachers lacking experience with children under five were considered less suitable for this work than other women who had such experience.

It was understood that courses taken to qualify women for the responsible post of Matron, Superintendent or Teacher in a wartime nursery did not entitle her to hold any child care post after the war for which a full training was required.

4. *Nursery-trained Nurses*. In a nursery for children of all ages up to five, the Matron and her deputy required the assistance of one or more nursery-trained nurses.
5. *Probationers and Nursery Assistants*. The trained nursing and/or teaching staff needed to be supplemented by voluntary workers or, where necessary, by paid helpers, e.g. immobile* auxiliary members of the Civil Nursing Reserve. Girls who had recently left school could be employed as probationers, as could women and girls trained through the Child Care Reserve.

*'Immobile' in this context related to women whose family commitments tied them to their home town.¹

¹ TNA, T161/1190-1, Treasury, Memorandum 249-III A (England), Ministry of Health enclosure to Circular 2435 and Board of Education Circular 1558, War-time Nurseries (July, 1941).

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