Institutionalisation
Occurs when children spend a substantial period living in an institution
- A good example is an orphanage
This sort of experience can be thought of as privation if children do not have the chance to form attachments, or deprivation if they do. Institutions often contain, both, privated and deprived children.
Research has shown that children who enter full-time institutional care at a young age and those who spend extended periods there, are disadvantaged in particular aspects of their development.

Rutter, M. & the English & Romanian Adoptees (1998)
- 111 children adopted in Britain form Romanian orphanages followed up
- Progress compared to that of 52 British children adopted at same time
- Age 4 - average IQ of Romanians had increased – for those adopted after 6 months, IQ doubled
- Physical development of Romanians also average and on par with that of British children adopted at same time
- Negative correlation between age when adopted and measures of physical and psychological development – the younger the child when adopted, that better they did
- Therefore, early privation can be compensated for by 6 months later on
- But early intervention is much more effective than later and should take place before child reaches 6 months

Is privation reversible?
We can draw on both case studies of abused children and follow ups of institutionalised children to help answer this.
- Genie – suggests privation cannot be reversed
  However, Genie was rescued extremely late (aged 13), so she may have had developmental issues prior to her abuse
  In addition, she did not receive the best care when rescued -> no recent data available regarding her progress
- Czech twins – suggests the privation can be reversed
  However, they were an unusual case as they suffered institutionalisation, then family fostering, then severe abuse
  Throughout everything, they maintained an attachment to each other
- Rutter & the ERA – suggests privation can be reversed
  However, the study focused on physical and intellectual development

Evidence therefore is very mixed. Certainly, good quality care leads to vast improvements in children’s progress and it appears that in some cases this may compensate for early experiences.
However, this is not always the case and it may be that effects of emotional development are harder to reverse.
It is not clear as to why one child might do better than another after early privation, but age seems to be a contributing factor.