



Opening Hours

Monday to Friday

9.00am - 8.00pm

Saturday and Sunday

10.00am - 3.00pm

Prisoner Categorisation

Why are prisoners categorised?

Some time after sentencing, adult male prisoners are assigned to the correct security category and allocated to an appropriate prison. Categorisation is based on the level of risk a prisoner might pose to the public or national security should they escape and the likelihood of their making attempts to do so.

- Category D – Category D prisoners can be trusted in open conditions.

Un-sentenced prisoners, or prisoners on remand awaiting trial, are generally housed in category B accommodation unless they have been provisionally classified as category A.

What are the categories?

There are four different security categories:

- Category A - Category A prisoners are those that would pose the most threat to the public, the police or national security should they escape. Security conditions in category A prisons are designed to make escape impossible for these prisoners.
- Category B – Category B prisoners do not need to be held in the highest security conditions but, for category B prisoners, the potential for escape should be made very difficult.
- Category C – Category C prisoners cannot be trusted in open conditions but are considered to be prisoners who are unlikely to make a determined escape attempt.

How are female prisoners and young prisoners categorised?

Female prisoners, and male and female young prisoners, whose escape would be highly dangerous for the public, police or others, or for whom escape should be made impossible, can be categorised as Category A. All other female prisoners are categorised according to whether they are suitable for 'open' or 'closed' conditions, based on risk and the likelihood of absconding. The remainder of male young prisoners are similarly categorized with the addition of a 'restricted status' category. These prisoners have been deemed a serious risk to the public and are required to be detained in designated secure accommodation.

Does someone stay the same category throughout their whole sentence?

This depends on the length of sentence. Category B and C prisoners who have a

sentence of 12 months to 4 years should have their category reviewed at six monthly intervals. Anyone in the last 30 months of their sentence should also have their category reviewed at the same frequency.

Category B and C prisoners with sentences of 4 years or more will have their categorisation reviewed on an annual basis.

Category A prisoners will not have their first category review until 2 years after their initial categorisation.

If a prisoner is deemed to pose less of a risk to the public or they are considered less likely to make an attempt on escape then they may be moved to a lower category. Similarly, if the prisoner is considered to be more of a risk then their category may be raised.

Can a prisoner appeal against their security category?

If a prisoner is not happy with the results of their re-categorisation after a review then they can pursue their complaint through the prison complaints system. It may, in some cases, be possible to challenge the decision via a judicial review but only if the decision is unlawful or made without following the correct procedure. In such cases legal advice must be sought. The Prison Service has a duty to give reasons for their decisions relating to categorisation so it is important to have these in writing before any appeal is mounted.

