

# Categorisation

## What is Categorisation?

All adult male prisoners are classified on reception into prison and put into one of four security categories based on the likelihood of escape and the risk to the public if they did escape. The categories are:

- ◆ Category A: prisoners who would be highly dangerous to the public, police or national security if they were to escape.
- ◆ Category B: prisoners for whom the highest security conditions are not necessary, but for whom escape needs to be made very difficult.
- ◆ Category C: prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions but who are unlikely to make a determined escape attempt.
- ◆ Category D: open conditions, prisoners who can be trusted not to try and escape.

## What about women prisoners and young offenders?

Unless they are Category A, they are not subject to formal security categories, but are classified as suitable for open conditions or closed conditions.

## Are remand prisoners categorized?

Unless they meet the criteria of category A, remand prisoners are not categorized. They are usually treated as category B. Unconvicted women and young people will be held in a closed prison.

## Once someone has been assigned a category, does it remain the same throughout their sentence?

Prisoners serving 12 months or more will have their category reviewed on a regular basis, usually every three to six months. If it is deemed that they are less likely to try to escape and/or less of a risk, their category may be changed to a lower one. The category could also be raised if a prisoner tries to escape or their behaviour suggests they pose more of a risk. It is not unusual for prisoners to be moved to a lower category as their release date approaches, as time in an open prison can help them re-adjust to life on the outside again, and allow them to gain work

experience or study as part of the rehabilitation process.

## If the prisoner thinks they have been placed in the wrong category, can they appeal?

It is not easy to appeal against security categorization. Prisoners are not told the reasons for their classifications and there is no formal appeal procedure. If the correct procedure was not followed, or the decision is legally irrational, it is possible to challenge it in the High Court by judicial review – if a prisoner believes they have grounds for a judicial review, they should seek legal advice. They can submit a request in writing to Prison Service headquarters through the requests/complaints system, but the Prison Service will only intervene in the most obvious cases.

## How does the security category affect the prisoner's sentence?

The category determines where a prisoner will serve their sentence as prisons are usually designated as category A, B, C, or D and they will be placed in a prison appropriate to their category. If they request a transfer, they can only be transferred to a prison of the correct category. The lower the category, the more freedom a prisoner will be allowed. In category D Prisons (also known as open prisons) they may leave the premises for work, education or town visits. Security will be much tighter in category A prisons, with visitors and mail subject to more stringent checks.

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