

Categorisation – women prisoners

What do the different security categories mean?

The security categories of women prisoners differ from those of male prisoners. The official definitions of female prisoners' security categories are as follows:

Category A - Prisoners whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or the police or the security of the state and for whom the aim must be to make escape impossible.

Restricted Status - Any female, young person or young adult prisoner convicted or on remand whose escape would present a serious risk to the public and who are required to be held in designated secure accommodation.

Closed Conditions - Prisoners for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary but who present too high a risk for open conditions or for whom open conditions are not appropriate.

Open conditions - Prisoners who present a low risk; can reasonably be trusted in open conditions and for whom open conditions are appropriate.

What determines my initial security categorisation?

Prison Service Instruction 39/2011 sets out the principles that determine the categorisation and re-categorisation of women prisoners, apart from the very few women prisoners who are Category A or Restricted Status, and are categorised and reviewed by NOMS Headquarters.

Pursuant to PSI 39/2011:

The purpose of categorisation is to assess the risks posed by a prisoner in terms of

- Likelihood of escape or abscond;
- The risk of harm to the public in the event of an escape or abscond;
- Any control issues that impact on the security and good order of the prison and the safety of those within it

And then to assign to the prisoner the lowest security category consistent with managing those risks.

Allocation often follows immediately after categorisation but is a separate process whose purpose is to assign the prisoner to a suitable establishment.

Unless serving a life or IPP sentence, at initial categorisation, all prisoners must be regarded as suitable for open conditions unless the following applies:

- Current sentence of 3 years or more
- Prisoner has been treated as a provisional category A whilst on remand
- Current or previous terrorist (or terrorist related) offences
- Previous escape from closed prison, police custody (except arrest or post-arrest) or escort
- Significant history of serious offending
- Serious criminal association
- Further charges outstanding (other than those of a minor nature)
- Previous sentence of 7 years or more (from which the prisoner was released within the last 5 years)
- The prisoner is diagnosed, or is suspected as suffering from, serious mental health problems
- There is reasonable concern regarding risk of abscond
- Previous breaches/failures to surrender
- There are victim issues or issues of public confidence that would indicate that open conditions are inappropriate
- The prisoner is currently subject to MAPPA level 2 or 3 management. Serious consideration must be given to the individual circumstances, to determine whether these can be managed in open conditions.

- An OASys risk of harm level which cannot be reasonably managed in open conditions
- The prisoner has been identified as a priority or a prolific offender (PPO)
- A Serious Crime Prevention Order is imposed
- If subject to a confiscation order, consider whether amount and default sentence imposed might increase risk of abscond.
- More than two years left to serve

Two years is considered to be the maximum time a prisoner should spend in open conditions. However, assessment of a prisoner's individual needs and risks may support earlier categorisation to open conditions. Such cases must have the reasons for their categorisation fully documented and confirmed in writing by the Governing Governor.

In addition, a prisoner must not be categorised as suitable for open conditions unless she is also eligible to be allocated to the resettlement estate. Eligibility for a resettlement estate is based on the later of 24 months before earliest release date; or 3 months before a prisoner has served half her custodial period less half the remand time.

Life and IPP sentence prisoners will be considered for open conditions in accordance with PSI 36/2010.

When will I have a categorisation review?

Women serving indeterminate sentences will be subject to sentence planning and review meetings, which must be held every 12 months, and at which a woman's security category should be reviewed.

Prisoners serving a determinate sentence of more than 12 months but less than 4 years; extended sentence prisoners serving a sentence of less than 4 years; and prisoners in the last 24 months of their sentence should have a review **every 6 months**.

Determinate sentence prisoners and those serving extended sentences with a sentence of 4 year or more should have a review **every 12 months**.

Who will decide on my recategorisation?

Recategorisation of all female prisoners (is to be carried out by the OCA Unit. Any decisions may be made by a board or by a single manager.

Procedures must be completed by staff specially trained and able to competently fulfil the OCA role. Staff completing the form must be responsible to a senior manager as designated by the Governor.

Can I appeal if I am not happy with the result after a review of my categorisation?

Yes. If after a categorisation decision or review, you do not believe that you have been placed in the correct category you should pursue your concerns via the internal complaints system. In such cases, the categorisation decision must be reviewed by a manager senior to the countersigning officer as a de novo review of all the facts.

In the case of Category A prisoners, you can still use the complaints procedure but your complaint form will be sent to Prison Service Headquarters for response, rather than being answered in the prison.

If you feel your concerns have still not been addressed satisfactorily then you can appeal to the Prison and Probation Ombudsman. It is also possible in some circumstances to judicially review categorisation decisions.

The Prison Service has a duty to give reasons for decisions about categorisation, so in order to mount your appeal you should request a full explanation of the decision and relevant reports in writing.

<p>Prisoners' Advice Service PO Box 46199 LONDON, EC1M 4XA</p> <p>TEL: 020 7253 3323 0845 430 8923 (low-cost no)</p> <p>FAX: 020 7253 8067</p> <p style="text-align: right;">UPDATED OCTOBER 2011</p>
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