

Categorisation and Recategorisation

Easy Read Self Help Toolkit



About this document



This document was made by CHANGE, a charity led by people with learning disabilities.

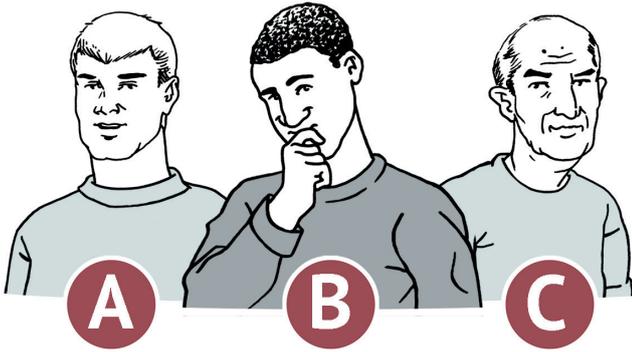


This document uses easy words and pictures to tell you about the categorisation and recategorisation of adult male prisoners.



You might want to read through it with someone else to help you to understand it more.

What is categorisation?

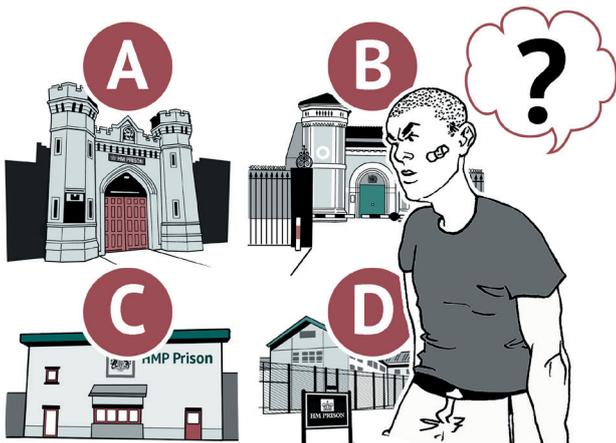


Once you are convicted, you will be put into a security category. The reason for this is to look at how much of a risk you are when it comes to:

- The chance of you escaping prison and how much of a risk you would be to others if you escaped from prison;
- How much you have to be controlled so that you are not a risk to the prison and to the people in it.



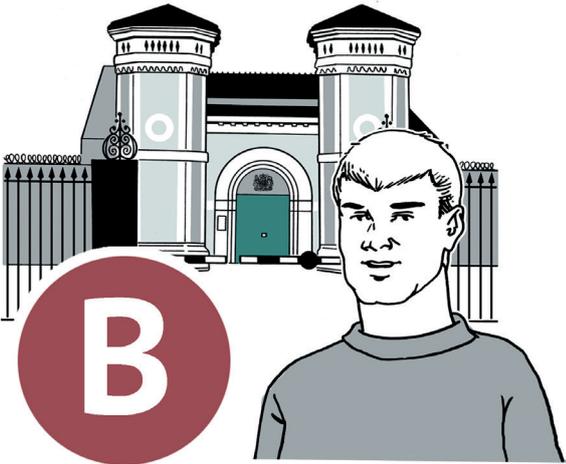
What do the different security categories mean?



There are four different categories for male prisoners. Women prisoners have different categories. From the highest to the lowest security level, they are:



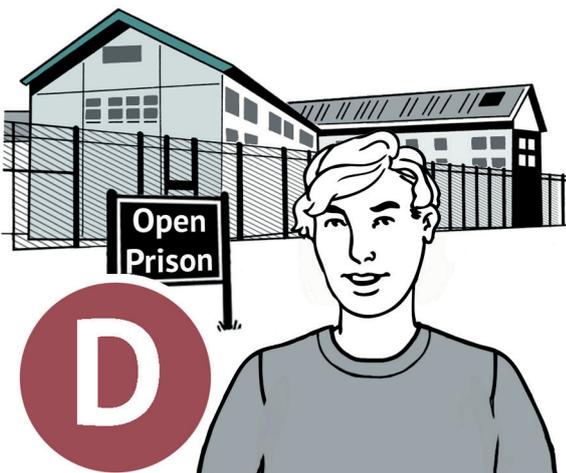
- **Cat A** – Prisoners in this category are very dangerous to the public, to police and to the country if they escape. It must be made impossible for them to escape.



- **Cat B** – Prisoners in this category do not need the highest level of security, but it must be made very difficult for them to escape.

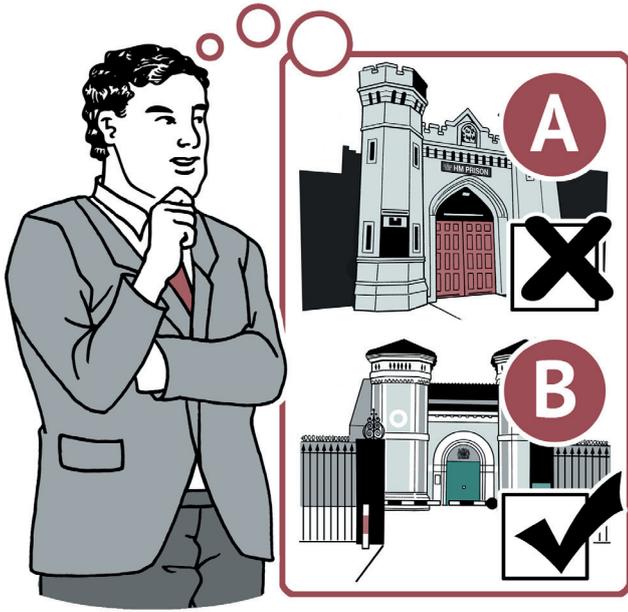


- **Cat C** – Prisoners in this category cannot be trusted in open conditions, but they do not have the resources or the will to try and escape.



- **Cat D** – Prisoners in this category can be trusted enough in open conditions and are suited for open conditions.

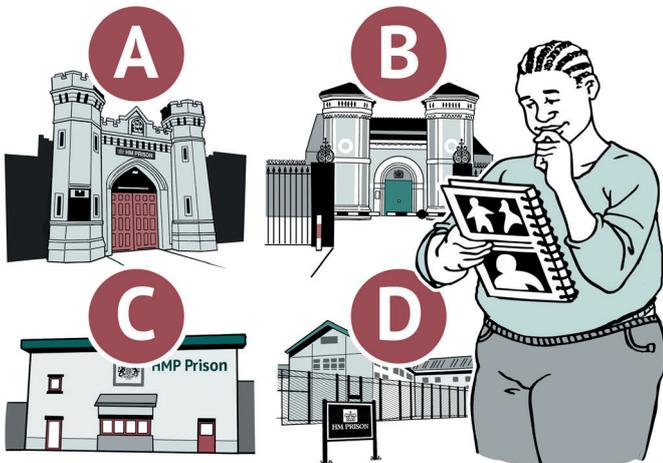
What are the principles of categorisation?



- All prisoners **must** be given the **lowest security category** possible. The prison cannot change this depending on the available spaces they have.

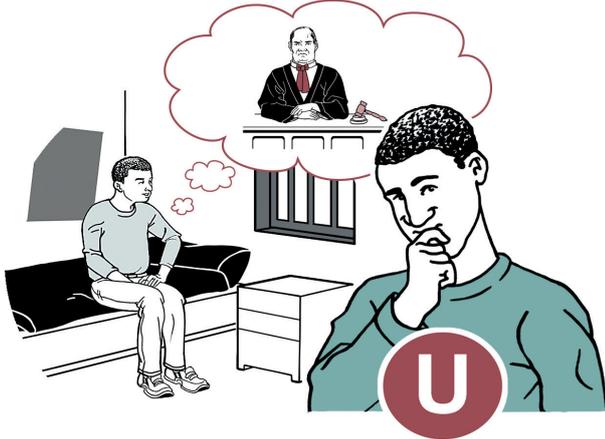


- Decisions on what category a prisoner should be in must be **fair, consistent and objective**. They must follow current policy and not discriminate against anyone.

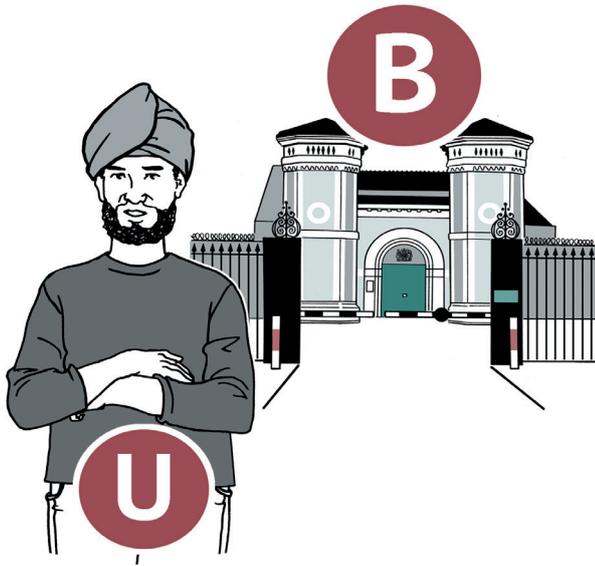


- The process of putting a prisoner in a category must be open. This means that you must be able to understand why you were assigned to a particular category. Sometimes you might not be given all the information on why you were placed in a specific category, but you should be told if that is the case.

When will I be categorised?



Unless you are going to be classed as a Cat A prisoner, you will not be assigned a category if you are on remand. You will just be put on Cat U – unclassified.



You will usually be held in Category B conditions in local prisons. In some cases, the Governor can decide to transfer you to a CAT C prison if this prison has all the conditions needed.

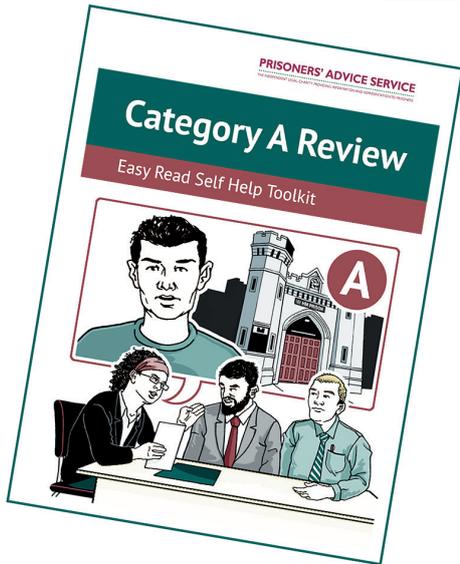
How does the initial categorisation process work?



Right after you are sentenced, the prison will receive some documents and should decide in 4 working days what security category you should be placed on.

However, unfortunately sometimes these documents do not come straight away and many prisoners found that there is a delay because of this.

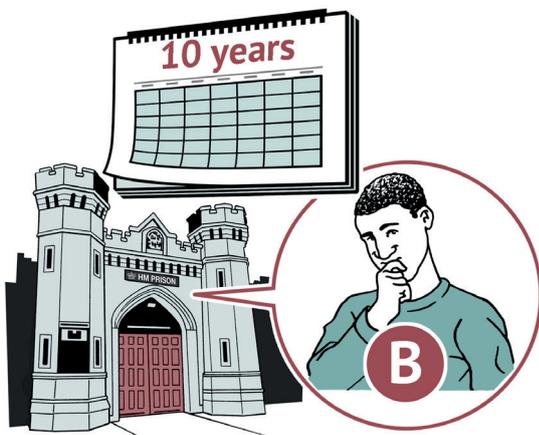
Will I be Cat A?



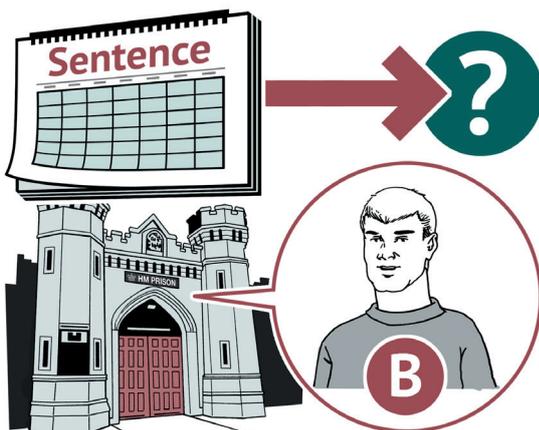
If you are going to be a Cat A prisoner, you can find more information about this in our separate self-help pack – ‘Category A Review: at a Glance’.

If not CAT A, will I be Cat B?

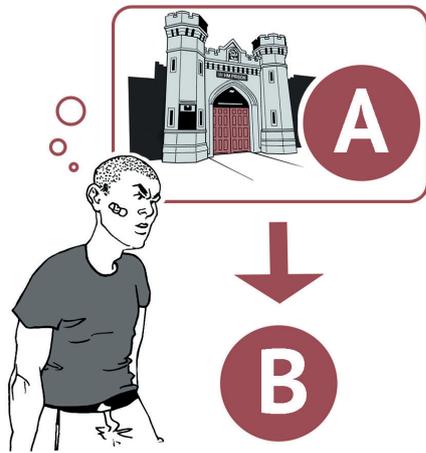
If you are not a potential Cat A prisoner then you will be initially considered as Cat B if:



- Your current sentence is of 10 or more years;



- You are now serving an Indeterminate sentence;

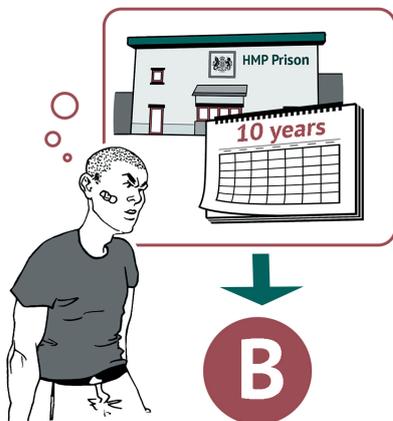


- you were a Cat A prisoner in a past sentence;



- you have been convicted of or have previous terrorist offences

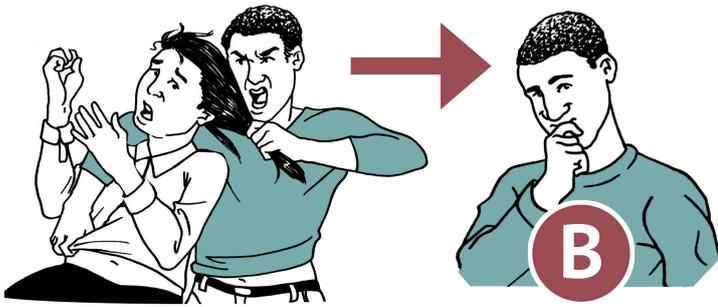
Or any **two** of the following applies:



- you had a previous sentence of 10 years or more;



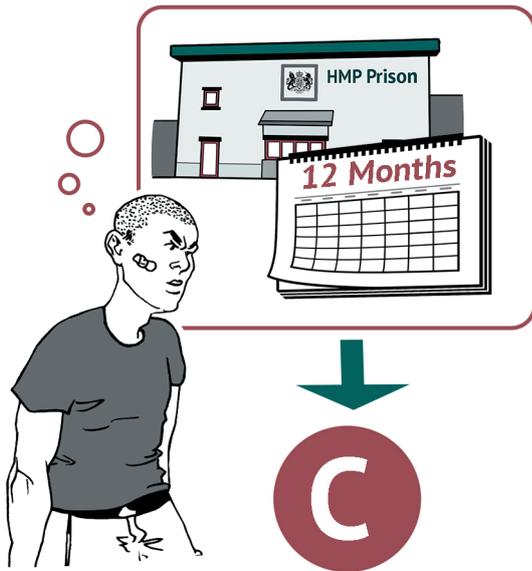
- you previously escaped from closed prison, police or escort;



- your current or previous conviction is for a serious offence that involved violence, threat to life, firearms, sex, arson, drugs or robbery.

If not Cat B, will I be Cat C?

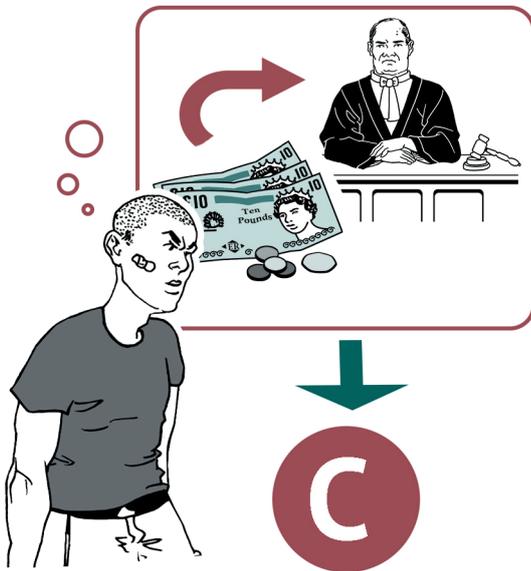
If none of the above applies but any of the following does, you will be Cat C:



- you now serve or you had a previous sentence of 12 months or more for violence, threat of violence, arson, sex offence, drug dealing or importation;



- you have ran away from the police, did not surrender, broke your bail, HDC or ROTL conditions in the past 3 years;



- you have an outstanding confiscation order or further charges.

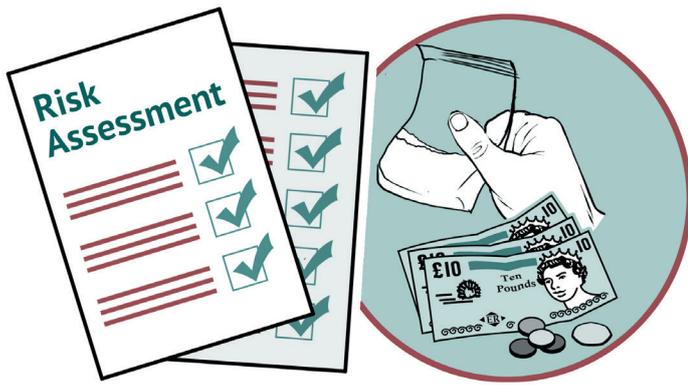
What else would be taken into account?



You will be initially given a security category. Later on, you will go through a risk assessment to make sure this is the right category for you.

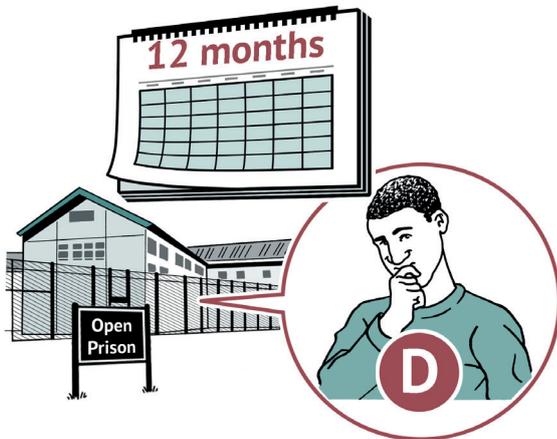


Please note that if you are a prisoner who has been **repatriated** from a foreign country, the sentence you received in that country might not be as long as the sentence you would have received in the UK for your crime. This will be considered when assessing you.



Further, if you were convicted of participating in serious organised crime, the risk assessment will look at the chances of you participating in such crime again in the future.

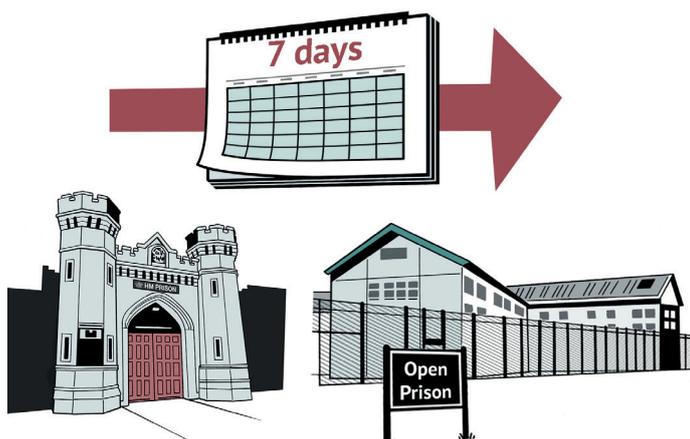
If I am not initially Cat B or C, will I be Cat D?



If none of the above factors apply to you and you are serving a determinate sentence of less than 12 months, you will be considered for Category D.



You will go through a risk assessment called a 'streamlined risk assessment' which will look at your health needs, your sentence history and other risk factors.

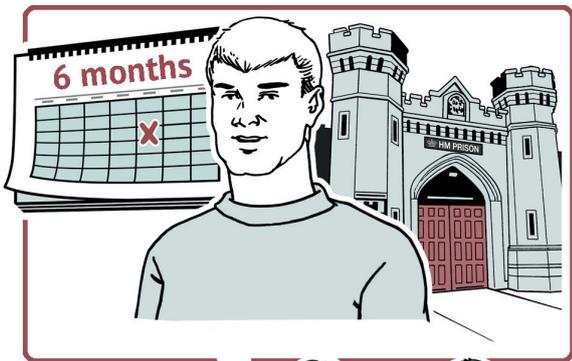


If you are declared a Cat D, you will be put on open conditions as soon as possible after sentencing, but only after you spend 7 days in closed conditions first.

When will my categorisation be reviewed?



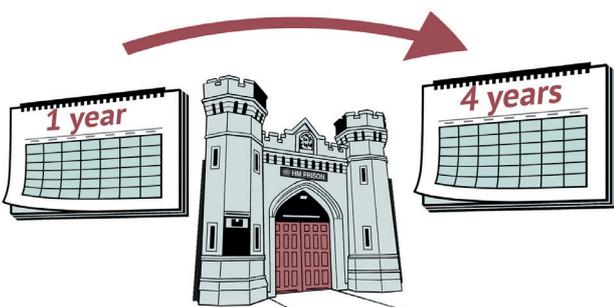
You must be aware that having reviews of your security category does not mean that after each review this will go down. It will only go down if you pose less of a risk.



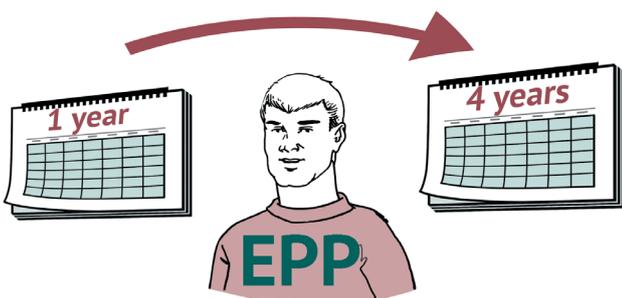
You will have a review every six months, if:

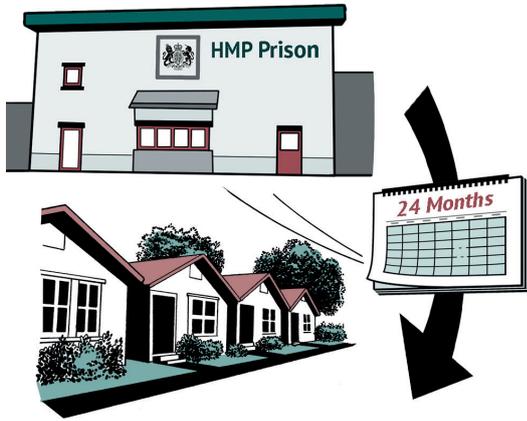


- you are serving a determinate sentence of between 1 and 4 years;



- you are an Extended Sentence for Public Protection (EPP) prisoner on a custodial term of under 4 years on;





- you are in the last 24 months of your sentence.

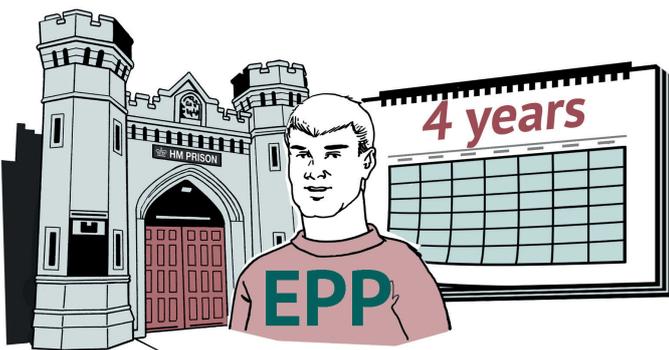


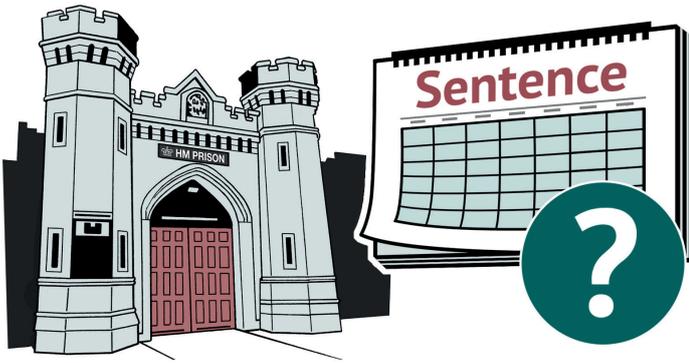
You will have a review a year, if you are serving:

- a determinate sentence of 4 years or more;



- an EPP with a custodial term of 4 years or more.





Your category will also be reviewed every year if you are serving an indeterminate sentence.

Will my categorisation be reviewed at other times?



Apart from regular reviews, your security category can be reviewed if a significant change happens. This can be a change in your behaviour, some new information about you that came up, your use of drugs, a change in your sentence or any other major changes.



If you are a Cat D prisoner or a prisoner in an open estate, then your category will only be reviewed if there is a change in your circumstances, if your behaviour becomes concerning or if there is new information on you that means you might be of a higher risk.

Who will make the decision?



If you are a **determinate sentence** prisoner, a board or a single governor will review your category. Their decision must then be approved by a “Governor 4” or above.



If you are an **indeterminate sentence** prisoner, depending on your category, this can be reviewed by lifer managers (from Cat B to Cat C), a Parole Board (for Cat D) or in certain circumstances, by the Secretary of State (to move to open conditions).

How will the decision be made?



Before the review, there will be a sentence planning and review (SPR) meeting. At that meeting a recommendation will be made. The board must base their decision on the full SPR reports prepared for that meeting and the decision must be made within 12 weeks of it. The board will be looking at whether your risk has reduced and can be managed in lower security conditions.

Can I attend the review?



There are some prisons who will invite you to attend the review, but this is very rare. Your prison does not have to invite you to attend. If you want to make sure your voice is heard, you must prepare and submit a written statement called a representation.

How can I prepare?



Writing representations can be difficult. It is important you leave plenty of time to do it. You should make sure you have the correct date of your next review. It is important you are aware what the prison will look at in their review so you can focus your representation on that. Speak to your Offender Manager and Supervisor and ask their views. They may be able to give you very useful information. This will also give you the opportunity to discuss your concerns with them before they provide an official recommendation.

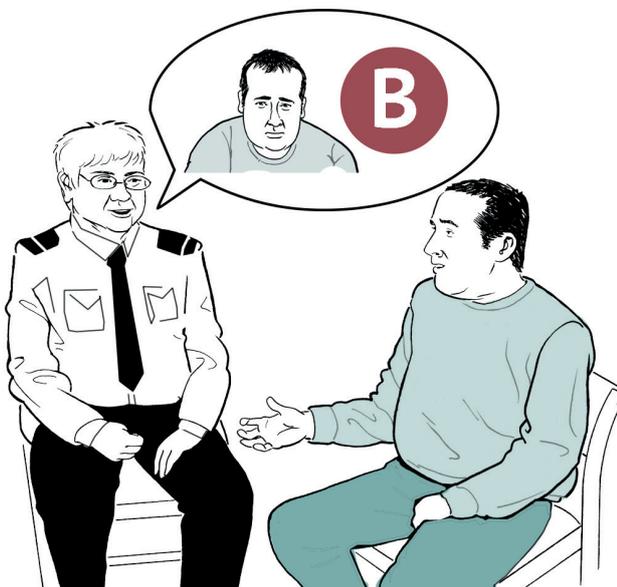


You should not avoid mentioning negative issues such as IEP warnings or adjudications. Instead, it will be to your advantage to discuss them and explain why the incidents have not increased the risk you pose, and why you are still suitable for the lower category you suggest you should be put in.

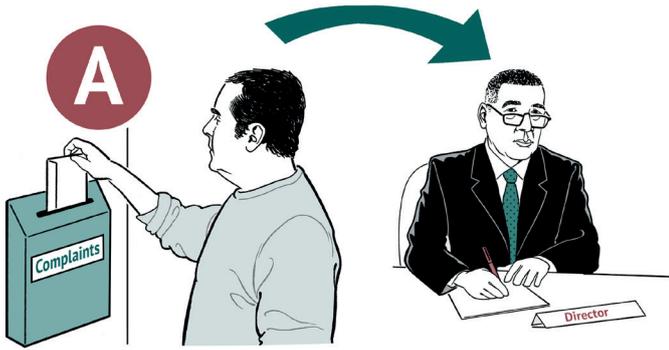
Can I appeal against a decision?



Yes. There is no special procedure for this, so use the usual complaints procedure. But ask your prison in case they have a special procedure they might use.



The prison has a duty to explain to you their decision on your security category.



Cat A prisoners can still use the complaints procedure but your form will be sent to the Directorate of High Security for response, rather than being answered in the prison.



If you feel your concerns have still not been addressed you can appeal to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PO Box 70769, London, SE1P 4XY).

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS



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