

Categorisation: Male Prisoners (Categories B-D)

Categorisation of male prisoners who are not Cat A or Restricted Status: is dealt with by the **Security Categorisation Policy Framework (SCPF)**.

The SCPF states “Individuals are categorised according to the risk they present to security, safety and public protection, and must be held in a prison providing levels of security appropriate to managing identified risks.”

The following risk factors to be assessed are:

- escape or abscond;
- harm to the public;
- ongoing criminality in custody;
- violent or other behaviour that impacts the safety of those within the prison; and
- control issues which disrupt the security and good order of the prison.

Official definitions of prisoner security categories

Cat 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.

Cat B Prisoners whose assessed risks require that they are held in the closed estate and who need security measures additional to those in a standard closed prison.

Cat C who are assessed as requiring standard closed conditions, and do not need additional security.

Cat D Prisoners who are either assessed as presenting a low risk or whose previously identified risk factors are now assessed as manageable in low security conditions.

What determines my initial categorisation?

The initial security category assessment must be completed as soon as possible to enable transfer to an appropriate prison within 10 working days of sentencing.

The SCPF states that Cat C will be the most appropriate security category for adults in the majority of cases. Where an individual presents a level of risk that cannot be safely managed in Cat C, then Cat B will be appropriate (unless Cat A is deemed necessary having followed PSI 9/2015).

Where risk is assessed as low and the following additional factors identified apply, you may be assigned to Cat D. You must be assessed as:

- low risk of abscond;
- low risk of harm to the public;
- unlikely to continue criminality while in custody;
- unlikely to otherwise abuse the low security or disrupt the good order of the open estate.

Initial categorisation for ISPs

There is no requirement that ISPs must initially be categorised to Cat B if Cat C is considered appropriate. The prison is not responsible for assessing ISPs for open conditions (see below).

When will I be recategorised?

Prisoners serving a determinate sentence and held in closed conditions (B & C) are reviewed every 12 months until they have less than three years left to serve to earliest release. At this point reviews will be every 6 months. If time left to serve at initial categorisation is less than three years, reviews must take place every 6 months.

A categorisation review must also take place whenever there is a material change in circumstances that impacts security risk. This may be either an increase or a reduction in risk. Such reviews can take place at any time.

Recategorisation for ISPs

Categorisation reviews should take place in line with scheduled sentence planning reviews unless you need to be able access a progression opportunity at a prison of a lower category, in which case there will be a categorisation review at that point, outside of the planned sentence planning timetable.

The prison is not responsible for assessing ISPs for open conditions. Moves of ISPs to open conditions will normally require a recommendation from the Parole Board but the final decision is made by the Secretary of State. Once the Secretary of State has decided an ISP is suitable for open conditions, prisons must categorise them as Cat D/Open.

Matters considered at categorisation reviews

The categorisation review must assess your current risks, your behaviour in custody, and whether the

identified risks can be managed in a different (lower) level of security. Recategorisation to a lower security category is not an automatic progression or right but must be based on an assessment that you can be safely and securely managed in lower security conditions. Check the SCPF for more details.

Who will decide on my recategorisation?

All Cat A prisoners (both determinate and indeterminate) are reviewed first by a Local Advisory Panel in the prison and then by the Cat A Team or Deputy Director of Custody High Security.

Categorisation assessments must be carried out by your Prison Offender Manager or another member of staff delegated the role by the Governor. Input may be sought from various departments. The final recommendation on category is the responsibility of the staff member designated to the role.

How can I prepare for my next review?

You can submit written representations and character references to be considered at your review. Make sure to check the date of your next review so you have time to prepare. You can also speak to your Offender Supervisor and Offender Manager and ask their views before writing your submissions.

When writing your submissions, do address any negative issues and provide your explanation as to why the incidents have not increased the risk you pose, and why you are suitable for the category you suggest you should be downgraded to.

If submitted, representations and references must be taken into account as part of the assessment process.

When will I be eligible for Category D?

An individual is eligible for consideration for Cat-D/Open conditions at initial categorisation if they have less than 3 years left to serve to earliest release. You cannot get Cat-D if you are a Foreign National prisoner and you have both a deportation order against you and your appeal rights have been exhausted. In addition, the individual must be assessed as:

- low risk of abscond;
- low risk of harm to the public;
- unlikely to continue criminality in custody;
- unlikely to otherwise abuse the low security or disrupt the good order of the open estate.

When will I get Cat D if I am serving an EDS?

Following an amendment to the Security Recategorisation Framework in March 2024, if you are an EDS prisoner you are now generally eligible for Cat D if you are within 3 years of your PED.

When will I be transferred?

The SCPF states that categorisation is a separate process from allocation. This means that after being assessed a particular category, it may not always be possible to allocate you immediately to a prison of that category.

Accessing paperwork

You can request a printed copy of your categorisation assessment form (ICA1 or RC1). If requested, the prison must provide you with a copy within 3 days, with the exception of any restricted information (section 8.11 SCPF).

Can I appeal a categorisation decision?

Yes. There is no special categorisation appeals procedure, although some prisons have a local scheme. SCPF suggests talking to your Key Worker first, but you are entitled to appeal a categorisation decision via the normal complaints system; asking that the decision be reviewed. 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.

The review will involve considering the decision afresh. This will usually be done by a person senior to the person who approved the original decision.

If you feel your concerns have still not been addressed you can appeal to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade, London E14 4PU) once you have exhausted the internal complaints process. On a few occasions, it may be possible to challenge categorisation decisions by way of judicial review; please see our judicial review information sheet for details or contact us for further advice.

[Guidance on Category A prisoners is found in PSIs 8/2013 and 9/2015. Legal aid is available for re-categorisation for Cat A prisoners. This information sheet only covers prisoners who are not Cat A. We can send our self-help tool kit for Cat A prisoners on request.]