

Prison life

Your prison number

You will be given a prison number when you first come to prison. The number will stay the same if you move to another prison. The number helps prison staff keep track of you and your things.

Your prison records

Your prison record is **information** the prison keeps about you on paper and on the computer.

It includes things like

- your name and date of birth
- which cell you are in
- information about when you went to court
- any adjudications you have had while in prison
- information about your health
- information about any work or education you are doing.

Prison Service Orders (PSO) and Prison Service Instructions (PSI)

These explain the prison regulations (rules) and the way prisons do things.

What prison staff do with information about you

- ✓ Prison staff will keep information about you private. But they may need to show other people like the police and the courts this information.
- ✓ You can look at the information the prison keeps about you. It will cost you £10 if you want to see **all** the information.
- ✓ To do this you have to fill in a form called a **Subject Access Request Form**. Ask a prison officer for this. Or you can write a note on paper to ask instead.
- ✓ Send the form or the note to the discipline/ custody office or the personnel department.
- ✓ The law says that the prison must keep certain information from you. For example, they cannot give you information that is being used to solve a crime.
- ✓ There is more information in **Prison Service Order 9020**. There is a copy in the library.
- ✓ To find out more about how prisons use information about you write to

The information manager
H M Prison Service
Room 330
Bell House
John Islip Street
London
SW1P 4LH

Your security category

Useful words

Open prisons. These are prisons where you have more freedom than other prisons to move around and do things. You may have your own cell with your own keys. You may be put in an open prison if staff think you can be trusted.

Closed prisons. Most people in prison are in closed prisons. These prisons are secure and people can not escape from them.

What is your security category?

- Your security category is about what type of prisoner you are.
- Prison staff will look at things like whether you might harm others, or try to escape from prison, and how dangerous you would be if you did escape.
- Prison staff will decide which security category you should be in and then tell you.
- If you are in a high security category (like A or B) you will have less freedom in prison to do things than other prisoners. Prison staff will do more to check on you and to stop you escaping.
- Young offenders have different security categories to adult prisoners.

Here are the security categories for adults

1. **Category A.** This is where prison staff think you will harm someone outside prison and/or you might try to escape so everything possible will be done to stop you escaping.
2. **Category B.** This is where prison staff think you should have no chance of escaping.
3. **Category C.** This is where prison staff think you will not escape, but that you cannot be trusted in an open prison.
4. **Category D.** This is where prison staff think they can trust you to be in an open prison.

Here are the security categories for young offenders

1. **Category A.** This is where prison staff think you will harm someone and that everything possible must be done to stop you escaping from the young offender institution.
2. **Restricted Status.** This is where prison staff think you should be kept in a safe part of the young offender institution.
3. **Closed Conditions.** This is where staff think you are less of a risk but still not safe to be in an open young offender institution.
4. **Open Conditions.** This is where staff think they can trust you enough to be in an open young offender institution.

Checking your security category to make sure it is right

Prison staff will keep checking you are in the right security category. They will change your security category if they think you have become safer or more dangerous.

- **If your sentence is between 1 year and 4 years**

Prison staff will look at your security category every 6 months.

- **If your sentence is more than 4 years**

Prison staff will check your security category every year.

- **If you are a category A prisoner**

Staff who work at Prison Service Head Office will check your security category.

- **If you are a category D prisoner**

Prison staff will not need to check your security category very much.

You can complain about your security category if you think it is wrong. **See page 110.**

Where you will serve your sentence

- ✓ You will start your sentence in a local prison or young offender institution near to the court you were sentenced at.
- ✓ You may stay at the same prison all the time if your sentence is for a short time.
- ✓ If your sentence is for a longer time you will be moved to another prison soon afterwards.
- ✓ You **cannot** choose the prison you go to. But you can ask prison staff if you want to move to a prison nearer your friends or family. They **may** be able to help with this.
- ✓ It can be a long wait to move to another prison as there are lots of prisoners who want to move prison.

The different types of prisons

1. Local Prisons

- You go to a local prison or young offender Institution first if you
 - have just been convicted or sentenced at court
 - are on remand and waiting for your trial.
- You will be given your security category here.
- You will either stay here or move to another prison or young offender institution. This depends on how long your sentence is.
- Local prisons are all closed prisons.

2. Training prisons

- You may be moved to a training prison soon after you get to a local prison.
- Training prisons can be open or closed prisons.
- You can go on courses and training at these prisons to help stop you committing another offence when you leave. You may have to wait a while to get the training or courses.

3. Young offender institutions

- These are places for young people aged 15 to 21 who have committed an offence.

More about different types of prison

4. High Security Prisons

- These are for prisoners who have been given a category A or B security category.
- There are 8 high security prisons at the moment. They are: Belmarsh, Frankland, Full Sutton, Long Lartin, Manchester, Wakefield, Whitemoor, and Woodhill.

5. Prisons run by private companies (sometimes called Contracted Prisons)

- These prisons are run by private companies.
- Prisoners follow the same rules and have the same rights as prisoners in other prisons.
- Some of the staff are different. For example, private prisons are run by someone called a director, not governor.
- Prison officers are called prison custody officers.
- There are 11 private prisons at the moment. They are: Altcourse, Ashfield, Bronzefield (women), Doncaster, Dovegate, Forest Bank, Lowdham Grange, Parc, Peterborough (men and women), Rye Hill and The Wolds.

What you can and cannot keep in prison

Main points

- ✓ You cannot keep many things in prison.
- ✓ You should give any extra things you cannot keep to visitors when they come to see you.
- ✓ It may be a good idea to send out or give visitors any expensive or valuable things you have. This is because the prison cannot do anything about it if your things are lost or broken, unless it can be shown that prison staff did it.
- ✓ Anything you cannot keep or give to visitors will be put into sealed bags and kept in a safe place inside or outside the prison until you leave.
- ✓ Prison staff will ask you to sign a form (property card) when
 - you get to a prison to say you have seen what prison staff have put into the bags and the bags have been closed in front of you
 - when you get to or leave a new prison to say that your things are still ok
 - when you are released from prison to say all your things are there.
- ✓ When you are released from prison you will get all of your things back, apart from anything you are not allowed to have or that is against the law.

What you can keep in your cell

- You can keep enough things in your cell to fit into **2** boxes.
- You can also have
 - a stereo or something to play music on
 - something bigger. For example, a guitar
 - any legal papers you are allowed to have.
- Prison staff will often do checks to make sure you do not have too many things, or the wrong things.
- You may have to earn the right to keep some things in your cell. **See page 64.**

There is a list of things you **may** be allowed to keep in your cell below. This may be different for each prison and may depend on what your security category is.

You may be able to keep these things

- ✓ Newspapers, books and magazines.
- ✓ Something to play music on and earphones.
- ✓ A computer and things to go with it, like floppy disks.
- ✓ Things you need for smoking. **Convicted** prisoners may be able to keep up to 62.5 grams of loose tobacco or 80 cigarettes or cigars, or a mix of both. **Unconvicted** prisoners may be able to keep up to 137.5 grams of loose tobacco or 180 cigarettes. You may only be allowed to smoke in your cell.
- ✓ Some games to play, including electronic games.
- ✓ Some things to do with hobbies. For example, art or writing.

Other things you may be able to keep in your cell

- ✓ 1 birdcage and one small bird (only if the prison allows caged birds, not many prisons do).
- ✓ A watch.
- ✓ An electric shaver.
- ✓ Things to help you if you have a disability.
- ✓ Batteries.
- ✓ Toiletries (things like a toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant).
- ✓ A wedding ring or another plain ring.
- ✓ A medallion or locket.
- ✓ Books and other things to do with your faith. And incense.
- ✓ Photos and pictures (if they are in a frame without glass).
- ✓ Greetings cards (things like birthday cards, if they do not have any padding on them).
- ✓ A calendar and a diary or personal organiser.
- ✓ An address book.
- ✓ Stamps and envelopes.
- ✓ Medicine (staff will tell you if you can keep it in your cell).

If you move to another prison and have to stay somewhere overnight

You can take these things: soap, flannel, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, shaving cream, shampoo, deodorant, radio, book, pen and paper. It is your job to look after your things and make sure they are safe.

Your money

Main points

- ✓ Your friends or people in your family can send you money while you are in prison.
- ✓ This money is called your **private cash**.
- ✓ The money cannot come straight to you. It will be kept for you by the prison.
- ✓ You can spend the money. How much you can spend depends on how well you behave in prison.
- ✓ For example, if you are a **convicted** prisoner you will be able to spend either £4.00, £15.50 or £25.50 per week. This depends on how good your behaviour is.
- ✓ If you are an **unconvicted** prisoner you will be able to spend either £22, £47.50 or £51.00 a week depending on your behaviour.
- ✓ You can find out more about this on **page 64**.
- ✓ The governor may sometimes let you have more of your own money to spend. For example, if you need money for legal things, or if you are a foreign national prisoner and you need to phone your family in another country.

How friends or family can send you money in prison

- They should try to send cheques or postal orders. These should be made out to **HM Prison Service** and sent to the **governor**.
- If they need to send money in cash they should write a note to go with the letter to say how much money is in the envelope.
- They should write these things on the envelope
 - their name and address
 - your name and prison number.

The prison shop - also called the canteen

- You can buy things in the shop each week like tobacco, batteries, sweets and toiletries (things like toothbrushes and deodorant).
- Shops in each prison will have different things.
- If you need anything like something special like something for your skin or hair then ask the shop if they can order it for you.
- You may be allowed to buy things from some companies by mail order (this is when companies send what you have bought in the post). Ask prison staff for information about this.

Smoking

- The only place you can smoke inside the prison building is in your cell. You will have to keep the door of your cell closed when you smoke.
- If you do not smoke, you do **not** have to share a cell with someone who smokes.

More about smoking

You cannot smoke at all

- in places for people under 18 years old
- in prison service vehicles
- in cells with lots of beds (dormitories)
- in cells or areas which prison staff say you cannot smoke in.

Ask healthcare staff for help if you would like to stop smoking.

Food

- Prisons have to do checks to make sure the food they give you is good enough. For example, that it is healthy, safe to eat and that you get enough food.
- Speak to catering staff (staff who work in the kitchen) if you have a problem with the food.
- Before meals, you will be able to choose the food you want to eat from a menu.

The menu should include

- something with meat or fish
- vegetarian food
- vegan food
- Halal food
- Kosher food
- You can choose to eat rice instead of potatoes.
- If you need to eat special food because of your health, healthcare staff will tell you about this.
- The prison may be able to get special food to do with your faith for you when there is a religious festival or event.

Clothes

Convicted prisoners

- You will have to wear clothes that the prison gives you. These clothes include underwear, socks and shirts.
- Prison staff must make sure these clothes are clean, in good enough condition and keep you warm and healthy.
- Prison staff must make sure they give you clean clothes often.
- In some prisons you may sometimes be able to wear your own clothes if you behave well in prison. **See page 64.**

Unconvicted prisoners

- You can wear your own clothes as long as they are ok to wear in prison and are clean and tidy.
- But you may have to wear clothes the prison gives you if
 - you are a security category A prisoner
 - the governor thinks you may try to escape. You may then have to wear clothes that make it easy for staff to see you if you try to escape
 - you are on your way to court. If this happens, prison staff will do everything they can to stop other people seeing you in these clothes.
- Your family and friends can bring clothes in for you and take clothes away to wash.
- You have to wear your own clothes when
 - you are at court
 - you leave prison if you have not been convicted.
- Ask prison staff for clothes if you do not have enough of your own to wear.

Bedding - sheets and blankets for your bed

- Bedding should be
 - clean and in good enough condition
 - warm.
- Mattresses and bedding should be aired for at least 1 hour a week.
- There is a laundry (where you can wash clothes) in the prison. You should be able to put clothes and bedding there once a week.

Baths, showers and toilets

- You should be able to use the toilet and sinks at any time.
- You should be able to have a hot bath or shower at least 3 times a week.
- Prison staff may be able to give you toiletries (things like toothpaste, a toothbrush and deodorant) if you do not have enough money to buy your own.

Time outside in the open air

- All prisoners should be able to spend between 30 minutes and 1 hour outside in the open air each day. The time you are allowed outside is different for each prison.
- Sometimes this may not happen. For example, if the weather is bad, or there is another reason to keep you inside.
- You should be able to do some exercise like walking. Prison staff will tell you what exercise you can do at your prison.
- Many prisons have time set aside when you can do PE (things like sport) and other things as well so that you can spend time away from your cell.

Incentives and earned privileges (also called IEPs)

This is about extra things you can get or do if you

- keep to the rules
- take part in work and other activities like your sentence plan in a good way
- the extra things you can have or do are different in each prison.

For example, if you follow the rules and do good things for yourself in prison you may be able to do things like

- spend more of your money
- get more visits from your family and friends
- earn more money
- have a TV in your cell
- wear your own clothes
- spend more time outside of your cell.

But, you can have these things taken away from you if you do not follow the rules.

How it works

Prison staff will tell you how many extra things you can get or do depending on your behaviour. There are **3** IEP levels

Basic level. If you are on basic level it means you can have certain things that the law says you can have, like some letters and visits. You will not be allowed anything extra.

Standard level. This means you may be allowed more visits and letters. You may be allowed to have a TV in your cell and to spend more of your money.

Enhanced level. This means you can have even more extra things. For example, you may be allowed more visits, a TV in your cell, or to spend more of your money.