

Driving a Minibus



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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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This fact sheet explains the licensing position of drivers of minibuses not used for hire or reward. It also explains the position for holders of Minibus and community bus permits.

1. Car licences held before 1 January 1997

If you had entitlement to drive cars prior to 1 January 1997 – shown as group A (B for automatics) on an old style licence or as category B and D1 **not for hire or reward** on a new style licence – you can drive a minibus provided:

- You are 21 or over, the minibus has a maximum of 17 seats including the driver's and is not being used for hire or reward.

To drive a minibus which has 9 or more passenger seats for **hire or reward** you will normally need passenger carrying vehicle entitlement (**PCV**) (category D1 or D). To obtain this you must meet higher medical standards and take a further driving test.

Hire or reward encompasses any payment in cash or kind by (or on behalf of) passengers which gives them a right to be carried.

However, if you drive a minibus for an organisation under the Minibus or community bus permit scheme, you will NOT need a category D1 or D licence even if a charge is made to passengers – see section 3 overleaf for further details.

New rules from 1 January 1998

Your minibus entitlement will remain valid in the UK and on temporary visits abroad until your licence is next renewed. When this happens your minibus entitlement (D1 and D1+E not for hire or reward) can only be issued if you make a special application which will involve meeting higher medical standards.

If your minibus entitlement is renewed you will normally be granted a D1 and D1 + E licence for 3 years which will allow you to drive minibuses, not for hire or reward, in the UK and on temporary visits to other EC/EEA countries. See below for more details about driving abroad.



If your minibus entitlement is not renewed, categories D1 and D1 + E will no longer appear on your licence. **However if you are aged under 70 years, you may still be able to drive minibuses in certain circumstances. The rules explained in section 2 overleaf will also apply to you.**

Drivers whose licences are due for renewal will receive advice about these new procedures with their renewal reminder letter. DVLA's Fact Sheet "Renewing your car driving licence" provides information about the medical standards.

Medically restricted licences

In general, car licences have to be renewed when drivers reach the age of 70 but younger drivers with restricted medical licences will also be affected by the new rules when their licences are first renewed. If you have a medically restricted licence you should note that you can still drive non-commercial minibuses on a voluntary basis without being subject to the higher health standards until you reach the age of 70. The rules explained in section 2 overleaf also apply to you.

Will licences be accepted abroad?

All entitlements on British licences will continue to be accepted at face value during temporary visits to other EC/EEA countries. But please note that under permit (see section 3) minibuses used for hire or reward cannot be driven outside the United Kingdom unless the driver has **passed a test** for category D1 or D.

Drivers who become permanently resident in another EC/EEA country may find that their entitlement to drive D1/D1+E (not for hire or reward) minibuses may not be acceptable. **Advice should be sought from the licensing authority of the new country with the exception of Northern Ireland which will accept all GB entitlements.**

2. Drivers who do not have minibus entitlement (category D1)

If your car licence does not allow you to drive minibuses, there are certain circumstances where you may still be able to do so.



You may drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats provided:

- i) you drive on behalf of a non commercial body for social purposes but not for hire or reward (unless operating under a permit);**
- ii) you are aged 21 or over;**
- iii) you have held a car (category B) licence for at least 2 years;**
- iv) you are providing your service on a voluntary basis; and**
- v) the minibus maximum weight is not more than 3.5 tonnes excluding any specialist equipment for the carriage of disabled passengers. Minibuses up to 4.25 tonnes will be permitted in certain circumstances (see below);**

When driving a minibus under these conditions you may not receive any payment or consideration for doing so other than out of pocket expenses or tow any size trailer; you may only drive minibuses in this country.

Drivers aged 70 or over will need to make a special application which involves meeting higher medical standards.

Maximum authorised mass and specialist equipment

The maximum weight of a vehicle that may be used on the road is known as the **maximum authorised mass (mam)**. It may also be described as the gross vehicle weight or permissible maximum weight. This is normally shown on a plate fitted to the vehicle.

There is no specified method of calculating the weight of specialist equipment such as tail lifts or wheelchair security fittings, but there is an allowance of 750kg for the extra equipment for minibuses which are intended for the carriage of passengers with disabilities or wheelchair users.

This would cover minibuses with a mam of 4.25 tonnes and would be comparable with the weight threshold which new drivers of cars/ light goods vehicles are permitted to drive.



3. Minibus and community bus permits

Minibus and Community Bus Permits are issued to organisations concerned with education, religion, social welfare, recreation or other activities of benefit to the community. Further information is available in the booklet 'Passenger Transport Provided by Voluntary Groups' available from Traffic Area Offices.

Minibus Permits allow certain organisations to make a charge without having to comply with the full public service vehicle operator licensing requirements and without the need for their drivers to have PCV (category D1 or D) entitlement. The services must be provided for their own members or for groups of people whom the organisation serves. The service must not be provided to members of the general public and the charges made must be on a non-profit basis. Community bus permits are issued to bodies wishing to run a local bus service on a voluntary non-profit basis using unpaid volunteer drivers. Members of the general public can be carried in the minibus.

Drivers who first held a licence to drive cars prior to 1 January 1997 will continue to be able to drive minibuses under the Permit Schemes provided their entitlement to drive minibuses (category D1 – not for hire or reward) remains in force.

Drivers who first held a licence to drive cars after 1 January 1997, and the drivers referred to above who have not renewed their minibus (D1 – not for hire or reward) entitlement, may drive a permit minibus provided the conditions at section 2 above are met.

The permit arrangements apply only in the UK – you cannot take a permit minibus abroad if it is used for hire or reward unless you hold either PCV D1 or D entitlement. Holders of category B entitlement may not tow a trailer when driving a minibus under a permit



This information supersedes that contained in previous fact sheets issued by DVLA. It is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law but provides details of changes. Other fact sheets deal with news about trailers, minimum test vehicle requirements and motorcycles. These are available by ringing 01792 792792, and can also be found on the Direct.gov website: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/motoring>

If you are in doubt about your licensing position after reading this leaflet you can telephone Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's Customer Enquiries whose staff will be able to help. The telephone number is 0870 240 0009. The lines are open between 8.00am to 8.30pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 5.30pm on Saturday.

You will be answered by an interactive VOICE system but will be able to speak to an operator during office hours. Some calls are monitored or recorded for quality purposes. Alternatively, our e-mail address is drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk or fax from inside UK – 0870 850 1285. From abroad – +44 1792 783071. Minicom users should ring 01792 766366.

If you change your name, address or vehicle, please notify DVLA immediately. Failure to do this could cost you a £1,000 fine.

This booklet only gives general information. It is not a statement of law. The information in this leaflet was correct at the time of printing.

Please contact DVLA's Customer Enquiries for the latest information.

