

# Driving a Minibus



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**This leaflet 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. Ordinary driving 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:

- 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 get 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 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 (category 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 category 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 page 4 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 will also apply to you.**



Drivers whose licences are due for renewal will receive advice about these new procedures with their renewal reminder letter.

### 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.

### Will licences be accepted abroad?

Yes, 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 category 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;
- (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); and
- (vi) you do not tow a trailer.

**Note:** 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 weight of 4.25 tonnes and would be comparable with the weight threshold which new drivers of cars/light goods vehicles are permitted to drive.

**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.***

### **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 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 category D1 or category D entitlement.**



## 4. Descriptions of Vehicle Categories

| Category      | Description   | Minimum age | Notes             |
|---------------|---|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>B</b>      | <p><b>Cars</b></p>  <p>Cars with a maximum authorised mass of no more than 3500kg, having no more than eight passenger seats, towing a trailer up to 750kg. A car and a trailer, where the total maximum authorised mass of both is not more than 3500kg and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the car</p> <p>A car with an unladen weight of 1.25 tonnes and a maximum authorised mass of 2 tonnes towing a trailer with a maximum authorised mass of 1.25 tonnes could be driven under category B entitlement as the maximum authorised mass of both is not more than 3.5 tonnes and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen weight of the car</p> | 17          | See note 1        |
| <b>B auto</b> | <p><b>Automatic cars</b></p> <p>As cars, but with automatic gearbox</p>   | 17          | See note 1        |
| <b>D1</b>     | <p><b>Minibuses</b></p>  <p>Vehicles with between nine and 16 passenger seats with a trailer up to 750kg</p>   | 21          | See notes 2 and 4 |
| <b>D1+E</b>   | <p><b>Minibuses with trailers</b></p>  <p>Combinations of vehicles where the towing vehicle is in category D1 and its trailer has a maximum authorised mass of over 750kg, as long as the maximum authorised mass of the vehicle and trailer is not more than 12000kg, and the maximum authorised mass of the trailer is not more than the unladen mass of the towing vehicle</p>  | 21          | See notes 2 and 4 |
| <b>D</b>      | <p><b>Buses</b></p>  <p>Any bus with more than eight passenger seats with a trailer up to 750kg</p>  | 21          | See notes 2 and 3 |

### Note 1

At age 16 you can get a licence if you receive the higher-rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance. However, if you stop getting the higher rate, the normal minimum age for driving a car (17) applies.

### Note 2

You can drive at age 17 if you are a member of the armed services.

You can drive age 18;

- (i) while learning to drive or taking your passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) test or CPC Initial Qualification or
- (ii) After passing a PCV test and CPC Initial Qualification when:



- Driving on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or
- Not engaged in the carriage of passengers, or
- While undergoing a national vocational training course to obtain a CPC Initial Qualification; or

(iii) If the PCV licence was obtained before 10 September 2008, when:

- Driving on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or
- Not engaged in the carriage of passengers, or
- Driving a vehicle of a class included in sub-category D1, and
- Driving under a bus operator's licence, Minibus permit or Community bus permit.

For further advice you will need to contact the Driving Standards Agency on 0300 200 1122 or you can e-mail [drivercpc@dsa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:drivercpc@dsa.gsi.gov.uk)

### Note 3

You need category D entitlement to drive an articulated bus (for example, a 'bendibus'). You can get more details from us.

### Note 4

If you passed your test for category B or B automatic before 1 January 1997 your licence will already show C1, C1E (8.25 tonnes), D1, D1E (not for hire or reward) as entitlement.

*If you have any questions about driving licences, you can find more details on our website at [www.direct.gov.uk/driverinfo](http://www.direct.gov.uk/driverinfo) and in booklet 'Information on driving licences' (INS57P) which is also available on the website at*

**[www.direct.gov.uk/motoringleaflets](http://www.direct.gov.uk/motoringleaflets)**

*You can also contact us in the following ways.*

#### **Phone (Customer Enquiries):**

*0870 240 0009 (lines are open between 8am and 8.30pm Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 5.30pm on Saturdays).*

**Fax:** 0870 240 1651 (from the UK),  
+44 1792 786369 (from abroad).

**E-mail:** [drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk)

*We cannot provide driver numbers or personal information from a driver's record by e-mail.*

*If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have a textphone, you should phone 01792 766366. This number will not respond to an ordinary phone.*

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

