



This fact sheet explains the licensing position of drivers of minibuses. 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 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 renewed on or after 1 January 1998. If your licence becomes due for renewal before this then the new rules will not apply to you at this time.

If your licence needs to be renewed on or after 1 January 1998, 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 and paying a higher renewal fee.

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 member states. 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, you may still be able to drive minibuses in certain circumstances. The rules for new drivers explained in section 2 overleaf will also apply to you.

Drivers whose licences are due for renewal from 1 January 1998 will receive advice about these new procedures with their renewal reminder letter.

In general, car licences have to be renewed when drivers reach the age of 70 but younger drivers with short term medical licences will also be affected by the new rules, when their licences are renewed after 1 January 1998.

Will my licence be accepted abroad?

Although your licence will cover you for temporary visits abroad, should you become permanently resident outside the UK your minibus entitlement may no longer be acceptable for driving. Advice should be sought from your new country of residence.

continued overleaf



2. CAR LICENCE FIRST OBTAINED AFTER 1 JANUARY 1997

If you pass your car test (category B) you can drive vehicles with **no more than 8 passenger seats**. To drive vehicles with between 9 and 16 passenger seats (category D1) you will need to meet higher medical standards and take an appropriate test.

But you will be able to drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats without having to obtain category D1 provided:

- i) the vehicle is used for social purposes by a non commercial body but not for hire or reward;
- 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.

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 750kgs for the extra equipment for minibuses which have been **designed or substantially and permanently adapted** for the safe 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.

If you had entitlement to drive cars prior to 1 January 1997 you will continue to be able to drive minibuses under the Permit Schemes.

New drivers who passed their car test (category B) on or after 1 January 1997 may also drive a permit minibus provided the driver licensing conditions, at section 2 above, are met.

THE PERMIT ARRANGEMENTS APPLY ONLY IN THE UK - YOU CANNOT TAKE A PERMIT MINIBUS ABROAD UNLESS YOU HOLD EITHER PCV D1 OR D ENTITLEMENT

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 to come. Other fact sheets deal with news about trailers, minimum test vehicle requirements and motorcycles.

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 01792-772151 and the lines are open between 8.15 am to 4.30 pm on Monday to Friday.