

JOB PROFILE: BUS DRIVERS & COACH DRIVERS

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

You can get your career moving when you work as a driver!

Bus drivers drive set routes, with scheduled stops where they drop off and pick up passengers. However the job isn't just about driving; bus drivers take fares, issue tickets, check passes and give timetable and route information when required. They may also have to provide assistance from time to time to anyone who needs help getting onto or off the bus.

Coach drivers drive their passengers to destinations all over the UK, not to mention abroad! Coaches operate on local routes, intercity routes and holiday tours as well as providing community transport services. Drivers will be responsible not just for driving, but also for checking tickets/bookings, assisting with customer needs, such as storing baggage and providing information. On holiday tours and day trips, drivers might even provide commentaries to their passengers.

Both bus and coach drivers are responsible for driving their vehicle safely, with consideration for the safety of their passengers and other road users. A good understanding of safety and security is essential. Drivers must check that their vehicle is safe and ready to be used for each journey. This means checking that items such as the lights and windscreen wipers are working, and that the bus is clean and there are no potential hazards.

HOURS AND ENVIRONMENT

Bus and coach drivers spend most of their time behind the wheel. Bus drivers can work up to 48 hours in a week, whereas coach driver hours can vary depending on the work that they are doing. For both jobs there are strict regulations governing maximum weekly driving hours and how long drivers are able to drive between breaks. Most drivers work shifts which can include daytime, evening and night-time driving. They also have to work some weekends and bank holidays.

Inevitably there will be some paper work, as they will need to keep a record of hours worked and write reports about vehicle faults and accidents.

Many drivers are given a uniform to wear by their company.

PERSONAL QUALITIES & SKILLS

To be a driver, you need:

- excellent driving skills and a thorough knowledge of driving laws
- a patient manner and responsible attitude with an understanding of health safety
- the ability to read traffic signs and follow instructions
- numerical skills
- good customer service skills and clear communication skills
- an assertive but polite approach to unruly passengers

ENTRY

You do not need any particular qualifications to become a driver but you will need a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) licence.

You can get a PCV licence by passing the test and meeting the necessary medical, eyesight and health requirements. You must hold a full EU driving licence and

normally be at least 18 (although you will need to be 21 to drive most coaches). See the Training section for more details.

In some cases, bus and coach companies take on trainee drivers and train them to get their PCV licence.

Some people also start out as volunteers, driving for community transport organisations. To drive for a non-profit-making company you usually need to be 21 and to have held a full driving licence for two years.

TRAINING

If you are taken on as a trainee driver, you will undergo driver training which usually lasts between two and four weeks. As well as being taught PCV driving skills you will also learn about other aspects of driving such as health and safety, money handling and customer service.

You can also train independently to get your PCV licence. More details can be obtained from the Driving Standards Agency (or from Driver and Vehicle Licensing in Northern Ireland).

Once in a job, you can work towards N/SVQ Level 2 in Road Passenger Transport or an N/SVQ Level 2 in Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driving.

You can also take a BTEC Certificate in Transporting Passengers by Bus and Coach, which is a short programme designed to support and enhance the knowledge of prospective or existing drivers. It is suitable for new entrants, for current drivers as continuing professional development, or for drivers who want to update their qualifications after an absence from driving.

For more information about training and qualifications for bus and coach drivers see the *GoSkills* website.

Driver CPC – A new EU Directive comes into force on 10th September 2008, which states that new PCV drivers will need to gain

a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) as well as the PCV licence. It is known as the Driver CPC.

Existing PCV drivers will be able to gain the CPC through periodic training. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) has details on its website about the Driver CPC training and test.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are over 130,000 drivers working in over 6,000 bus and coach companies in the UK but there are still some shortages. Many companies advertise jobs on their company websites and in the local press.

You can work for companies ranging from national organisations, with a large fleet of vehicles to small firms, with just a few.

You can move into roles such as service controller, bus inspector, depot manager or driver training instructor.

ANNUAL INCOME

Trainee and new drivers usually earn between £10,000 and £14,000 a year. Experienced bus drivers earn £15,000 to £18,000 a year.

Overtime and shift work may also increase wages. Figures are intended as a guideline only.

FURTHER INFORMATION

GoSkills

<http://www.goskills.org>

Driving Standards Agency (DSA)

<http://www.dsa.gov.uk>

DVLNI

<http://www.dvlni.gov.uk>