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## Buses, coaches and accessibility: frequently asked questions

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## General

### **What types of buses and coaches are covered by the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR)?**

PSVAR (as amended) applies to all new public service vehicles (buses or coaches) introduced since 31 December 2000 with a capacity exceeding 22 passengers used to provide a local or scheduled service.

### **Do the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) apply to the UK as a whole?**

PSVAR (as amended) applies in England, Scotland and Wales and are the responsibility of the Department for Transport's Mobility & Inclusion Unit. Northern Ireland has introduced separate regulations (these are the responsibility of the Department for Regional Development).

### **When will all buses and coaches meet the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR)?**

All full size single deck buses over 7.5 tonnes will be fully accessible from 1 January 2016, and all double deck buses from 1 January 2017. **New** buses weighing up to 7.5 tonnes and coaches will be required to have wheelchair access from 1 January 2005. **All** buses weighing up to 7.5 tonnes will be fully accessible from 1 January 2015 and **coaches** by 1 January 2020.

## For disabled passengers

### **What has been done to improve access to bus services for disabled people?**

The powers in Part 5 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) allow the Government to make regulations requiring all new land-based public transport vehicles - trains, taxis, buses and coaches - to be accessible to disabled people, including those who need to remain in wheelchairs. The regulations that govern access to service buses and coaches are known as the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR). The PSVAR have been applied to all new buses and coaches which carry more than 22 passengers and are used on local or scheduled services since 31 December 2000.

Information about how we are making other forms of transport accessible is available here:  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/>.

### **What measures have been taken to encourage local authorities and bus companies to introduce low floor buses?**

In recent years low floor buses have been introduced in increasing numbers. This change was promoted both by the Department, through a series of research and demonstration projects, and by our statutory advisers, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) do allow for high floor vehicles, but bus operators and manufacturers of full size single deck and double deck buses have, by and large, opted for low floor vehicles.

Over one third of full size local buses are now low floor vehicles rising to over 80 per cent in major urban areas. 90 per cent of the London fleet comprises low floor vehicles.

## **Some bus drivers are reluctant to put the ramp down or kneel the bus what do the regulations say about this?**

The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers (Amendment) Regulations 2002 have, since 1 October 2002, required the bus driver or conductor to provide reasonable assistance to disabled people, including wheelchair users, to board and alight.

Please note that these regulations only apply to vehicles which are regulated under the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR), but we strongly recommend that bus operators adopt those practices for all their accessible buses.

We have produced guidance to help both manufacturers and operators and drivers to understand their new duties and there is an NVQ module covering disability awareness training for bus drivers introduced by GoSkills (the Sector Skills Council for Passenger Transport). It is clearly in the best interests both of the bus driver and the passenger if the driver is fully aware of the needs of his disabled passengers and how to respond to them. However, the regulations do allow the driver to refuse to help you if doing so would adversely affect his health or safety, your safety or that of other passengers or the safety of the vehicle.

## **How can I find out if my wheelchair is suitable to use on buses?**

The Department for Transport commissioned Ricability to produce a guide, Wheels within Wheels, which outlines what wheelchair users can expect from newer trains, coaches, buses and taxis. It has information on how passengers can find out where accessible services are running and gives tips on travelling in a wheelchair. In addition, it also lists the key dimensions of the wheelchairs currently available in the United Kingdom, and which of those will fit onto public transport.

## **Why am I unable to take my electric scooter on a bus or coach?**

None of the regulations for buses or coaches deal with the carriage of scooters. This is because scooters are outdoor vehicles intended for use as an alternative to public transport for short trips. They are generally less manoeuvrable than wheelchairs and cannot be used as a seat on a vehicle because of their instability and difficulty in providing appropriate restraint systems for the both the scooter and the user.

## **Who should I contact if I have a complaint?**

You should contact the appropriate bus operating company or, in the case of London, Transport for London. If this does not prove satisfactory, then you can contact Bus Users UK, an independent body set up to ensure bus passengers have a voice with the industry (Scotland has its own Bus Users Complaints Tribunal) or, for transport in London, the London Transport Users Committee.

## **Does PSVAR apply to coaches that are used for leisure excursions?**

PSVAR only applies to new public service vehicles with a carrying capacity of more than 22 passengers that are used on local or scheduled services and have been introduced into service since 31 December 2000. Proposals for access to other services and for small vehicles (with 22 passengers or less) will be subject to further consideration and consultation.

## **When will there be audible and visual announcements on buses?**

Trials of audible and visual announcements on buses in Leeds during 2001 showed that their introduction on buses, whilst well received by passengers, did present some technical challenges (<http://dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/buses/research>). We are monitoring the progress of new technologies designed to address these issues and regularly review how best to ensure the wider adoption of such systems within the UK bus fleet.

## **For bus and coach operators**

### **Where can I find guidance on how to make my buses and coaches comply with accessibility regulations?**

The regulations that govern access to service buses and coaches are known as the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR). The regulations apply to all new buses and coaches introduced into service since 31 December 2000 with a capacity of more than 22 passengers and used on local or scheduled services.

We have published guidance for vehicle manufacturers and operators to assist in meeting the regulations. Please note, however, that the guidance does not replace nor does it qualify the regulations in any way, and in every case reference should be made to the relevant provisions of the PSVAR themselves to determine the precise extent of the legal requirements.

### **Are exemptions available?**

Under Section 43 of the DDA 1995 the Secretary of State may authorise, by means of a special authorisation order, the use of a regulated public service vehicle which does not comply with accessibility regulations. It is important to note that a vehicle which does not meet all of the requirements of the accessibility regulations cannot be issued with an accessibility certificate.

Before a special authorisation order is issued it will normally be necessary for a full accessibility inspection to be carried out. A vehicle will have to comply fully with accessibility regulations apart from those items for which a special authorisation is granted.

Detailed guidance on applying for special authorisation orders has been produced. Manufacturers and operators are advised to read this before submitting an application for a special authorisation order.

## **Where can I obtain copies of your guidance documents?**

A list of the literature we produce is available here. Single copies of these documents are available from the Mobility and Inclusion Unit; for larger quantities, please contact:

DfT Free Literature  
PO Box 236  
Wetherby  
LS23 7NB

**Tel:** 0870 1226 236

**Textphone:** 0870 1207 405

**Fax:** 0870 1226 237

**E-mail:** [dft@twoten.press.net](mailto:dft@twoten.press.net)

## **Where can I find more information about training?**

There is a dedicated Sector Skills Council for passenger transport. GoSkills is the recognised authority for business working in the UK passenger transport sector and it aims to increase skills and identify specific training solutions for the industry.

GoSkills facilitates a range of training courses from introductory to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). More information about the range of courses it offers is available here:  
<http://www.goskills.org/index.php/home>.

The NVQ course for bus drivers includes a video called "We can do that". The video, produced in conjunction with the Department in 2004, is available direct from GoSkills as a DVD, video or CD-ROM and costs Â£10.

## **How can I contact you?**

For engineering and technical queries about PSVAR, please contact the Engineering & Research Branch.

For queries on wider aspect of accessible public transport, please contact the Disability Policy Branch.