

## Training & professional development



### Learning outcomes

- Professional development
- HRM
- Training in the workplace

### Introduction

For over 70 years, the national bus network has been an essential and integral part of Ireland's transport **infrastructure**. Bus Éireann was formed in 1987 as a subsidiary of CIE (Coras Iompair Éireann) to provide bus services throughout Ireland excluding Dublin City. Bus Éireann is committed to meeting the needs of its customers and this is reflected in its **Mission Statement** "to succeed by providing excellent service to our customers through a committed team". Part of the Bus Éireann logo is the Irish red setter, which is friendly, reliable and fast, as Bus Éireann strives to be when serving its customers.

Bus Éireann offers a wide range of services catering for different customer groups and market sectors:

- Expressway inter-urban coach services
- Eurolines coach services to Britain and Europe
- City bus services – in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford
- Town services in Athlone, Balbriggan, Drogheda, Dundalk, Navan and Sligo
- Commuter bus services from Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford
- Local bus services throughout Ireland
- School bus service – on behalf of the Department of Education and Science

A level of State funding ensures the continued operation of many routes which are not profitable on a commercial basis.

Bus Éireann employs over 2,700 people directly. A further 1,700 are sub-contracted in the School Transport scheme. Its business activities also create employment for people in other sectors who supply services and materials. Its depots are located in various parts of the country, so the benefits of spending on wages, goods and services are widely dispersed throughout many towns and rural areas.

Bus Éireann's employees are fully committed to providing all its customers with quality service at value for money prices.

- **Drivers:** skilled professional drivers drive millions of miles every year, over all types of roads and in all kinds of weather conditions.
- **Maintenance:** highly trained maintenance staff based at 15 depots around the country support the drivers. Activities include: daily fuelling, washing and cleaning of buses, maintaining the fleet in top condition at all times.
- **Supervisors:** co-ordinate the activities of both drivers and garage staff.
- **Administration:** clerical and administrative staff provide a wide range of services, including customer service in travel centres and bus stations as well as payroll administration and revenue control.
- **Regional managers:** the business is divided into five regions – East, South, South West, West and North West.

## Development of fleet service & training

Bus Éireann is an integral part of Ireland's transport infrastructure. It is Bus Éireann's policy to purchase more accessible vehicles as part of its continuing programme of fleet replacement and upgrading. Improvements such as **high visibility nosing** on steps, hand rails, high quality internal lighting and heating, public address systems etc. are all designed to make its buses and coaches safer, more accessible and more user friendly. Since 1995, Bus Éireann has invested in renewing and upgrading its fleet of over 1,300 coaches and buses by the acquisition of:

- Expressway coaches
- Commuter service coaches
- City service buses.

**Safety** - There has been an unprecedented improvement in the quality of service and standards of comfort and safety offered to customers travelling on all categories of service. Each passenger has their own seat and their own seat belt. It is now law to wear safety belts where they are fitted.

**Accessibility** - All new city service buses are of low-floor design with full wheelchair accessibility, incorporating an entrance ramp and a designated wheelchair space. All new coaches are wheelchair accessible and fitted with lifts or ramps. Drivers are trained to position buses correctly at stops, provided access to the bus stop is not obstructed by parked vehicles.

**Meeting customer demand** - The needs of mobility-impaired people are considered when specifying coach type vehicles for long distance commuter routes and Expressway services. However, customer demand in this **competitive sector** of the bus travel market is for luxury specification coaches with a high floor and underfloor luggage space of maximum capacity. In an effort to ease the situation, all new coaches purchased by Bus Éireann since 1990 have been specified with a 'kneeling' facility which allows the front of the coach to be lowered to provide easier access.

**Improving facilities** - All new station facilities are designed to be accessible and under the National Development Plan, the company is investing in improving access to existing facilities.

**Public addressing systems** - All new coaches and large capacity city single deck buses are fitted with public address systems. New city buses also have an internal 'bus stopping' sign, which indicates to passengers that the bus is stopping and allows them to remain seated until the bus comes to a stop.

## Training

Bus Éireann has extensive training programmes covering both induction training and ongoing refresher training in driving techniques and customer care. Before he or she can sit behind the wheel of a Bus Éireann coach, every driver must have passed the PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) driving test.

Newly recruited staff undergo a minimum of two weeks of induction training where the emphasis is on safety, accident prevention and defensive/eco driving techniques, **customer service** and route familiarisation. The driver then takes to the road and becomes familiar with routes as well as making sure that the highest level customer service is provided.

## Commitment to safety

New regulations to promote road safety for bus and coach drivers have recently come into force. The EU has made it mandatory throughout the member states to provide better training for professional drivers. The EU Directive 2003/59/EC makes it compulsory for European member states to have Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) for all professional bus and truck drivers. **EU Directives** require member states to achieve a particular result without dictating the means of achieving that result.

The introduction of driver CPC requires more rigorous testing and continuous training for professional bus drivers



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from September 2008. The holder of a full driving licence for a bus before CPC is introduced will automatically be entitled to a Driver CPC. This is known as 'acquired rights'.

A person applying for a bus licence is now required to pass a further theory and practical driving test in addition to the ordinary bus driving test if they wish to become a professional bus driver.

All drivers who hold a Driver CPC are required to complete a 35 hour training programme during the following five years in order to retain the Driver CPC. This is a one day training programme per year over the five years, which covers vehicle safety issues, safe driving, environmentally friendly driving, assessment of risk, health and safety and the ability of drivers to deal with an emergency. This directive recognises the particular responsibility bus and coach drivers have for the safety of their passengers.

Bus Éireann has embraced the new certification as part of its commitment to saving lives on Irish roads and improving the quality of service to its customers. It believes it will enable drivers to keep up to date with ever-changing regulations while benefiting from state-of-the-art training throughout their whole career.

## Professional development

Bus Éireann is committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices, policies and procedures and to the creation of a working environment free from discrimination.

Bus Éireann's employment policy fully conforms to the **Employment Equality Act 1998**. Accordingly the company ensures that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment due to any of the nine grounds contained in the Act (i.e. age, gender, marital status, family status, religion, race, sexual orientation, membership of the travelling community, disability) pay and conditions of work, training and opportunities for career development and promotion.

Selection, promotion and treatment of all employees is on the basis of their abilities and merits only. Benefits for all grades of staff include:

- Medical, sick pay and pension schemes
- Certain free and reduced fare travel facilities
- Uniform for all front line staff
- Training
- Study scheme
- Staff parking in depots

## Driver training

'Training and Development' is a major function of the **Human Resources** Department within a firm. In Bus Éireann, drivers are trained in safety issues to deal with hazards, health and safety and passengers with special needs, among many other issues.

Bus Éireann recognises the **diversity** of its customers and the importance of providing a quality service to meet their varied needs. Drivers are trained to be courteous and supportive to people with special needs and understanding of the challenges they face when using the services of Bus Éireann.

Ensuring that the highest standard of safety and driver training is provided can only be achieved if the instructors are themselves suitably qualified for the task. Bus Éireann is the first fleet operator in Ireland to be accredited by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) as a training company.

**Instructors** - The IAM advanced driver instructor certification of Bus Éireann's training instructors provides independent validation and recognition of their skills in training professional bus and coach drivers. This contributes to an even greater awareness of safe driving practices and defensive driving skills.

**Inspectors** - All Bus Éireann training inspectors have received IAM advanced driving instructor certificates. These training programmes have benefits for drivers. On completion of refresher courses, drivers can take the IAM advanced driving test and gain membership of the IAM.





## A day in the life of a training instructor

### Q1. What is your typical day like?

Our day can be varied depending on what we have planned i.e. training of new recruits, refresher courses, remedial training, vehicle familiarisation, route training etc. We start at 08:30 by preparing our training centre and vehicles for the topics we are covering on that day. We would then welcome the trainees and set out the course objectives. The training can take the form of classroom presentations/talks or practical training outdoors on vehicles, equipment etc.

### Q2. How many people do you train at a time?

For classroom presentations you can have up to 16 trainees but for practical training a ratio of 3 to 1 is best practice for safety reasons.

### Q3. What skills do you need in your job?

Organisational, motivational and leadership skills are very important. A good knowledge of health and safety and all regulations relating to professional drivers is important. An ability to give practical demonstrations and IT skills are also essential as is the ability to identify and rectify faults.

### Q4. What qualities do you need to be able to do your job effectively?

An instructor needs to be personable, a good communicator and be able to motivate and influence people. They need to be interested in and respect people of different backgrounds/cultures.

### Q5. What are the key elements of training that you feel are important for students to know about?

Safety of themselves and others i.e. passengers, road users, work colleagues etc. To be fully familiarised and competent with the vehicles/equipment they use in their line of duty. To be fully aware of hazards on the roads, at bus stations, bus stops and their general work environment. To be confident and professional.

### Q6. What do you like most about your job?

The variety the job offers, building relationships with the people you train and that you can measure your success. There is great satisfaction when you see an employee carrying out their job professionally after you've trained them.

### Q7. Do you use practical or written examinations /evaluations?

Assessments and evaluations are always carried out but written examinations would only apply to certain courses.

### Q8. What training/qualifications do you need for your job?

Recognised driving instructor qualifications from the RSA (Approved Driving Instructor) and Driving Instructors Register of Ireland (DIR). You have to be trained, usually by the manufacturers, on the many different vehicles so that you can teach others to operate these vehicles safely. You have to receive training and be continuously updated on health and safety issues and all regulations governing road transport.

### Q9. What type of person would suit this job?

A patient, understanding, customer-focused person who has a good knowledge of all aspects of the job.

### Q10. What promotion opportunities are there for you?

Based on the knowledge gained in the position there would be a variety of opportunities which you would be in a good position to apply for e.g. chief supervisor, head of training etc.

## Glossary

**High visibility nosing:** A strip of material (usually yellow or black rubber) on the outer edge of a step that helps to passengers coordinate their gait during stair ascent and descent.

## Student activities

1. Bus Éireann is a state company which provides a transport service. Name five other state companies and outline the service they provide to the people of Ireland.
2. Go to [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie) and find the price of travel and journey times between:
  - Galway and Dublin
  - Sligo and Tralee
  - Rosslare and Cork
  - Your local bus station and the nearest big city
3. 'Training and Development' is one function of a Human Resource Manager. Working in groups of three, develop a poster which could be used as a learning resource explaining the other functions of a HR manager.
4. (i) List and briefly explain the nine grounds under discrimination is outlawed under the 1998 Equality Act.
  - (ii) What is the name of the body that enforces this law?
  - (iii) Briefly explain its functions.