



Quick Start Guide to the regulations for model flying

January 2026

There are regulations for operating unmanned aircraft and full details can be found in **UK Regulations (EU) 2019/947**.

BMFA members (including those with British Drone Flyers membership) can choose to operate under the UK Open Category of the Regulation or the BMFA's 'Article 16 Authorisation' issued by the CAA.

The BMFA 'Authorisation' defines different and more flexible operating requirements for members operating aircraft up to 25Kg. To benefit from the Authorisation, you must familiarise yourself with the requirements.

For full details, please see <https://rcc.bmfa.uk/article-16>.

The British Model Flying Association are here to help make it easy for you!



REGISTERED AND COMPETENT



It is a legal requirement for most model flyers to register as an Operator with the UK CAA (if 18 or over) and have evidence of their competency (regardless of age) before they fly.

You can register as an Operator through the BMFA.

Model flyers must also provide evidence of remote pilot competency by obtaining a UK CAA Flyer I.D. by taking the CAA online DMARES test or the BMFA's RCC online test.

A UK CAA Operator I.D. number must be displayed on (or be easily accessible without tools if within) the aircraft.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE



You are legally responsible for ensuring that your flights are conducted safely.

It is essential that you are aware of the laws which apply.

For further details of Operator and Remote Pilot responsibilities, please refer to our full guidance.

BE AWARE: Failure to operate lawfully could result in criminal prosecution.

MINIMUM AGE



There is no minimum age for a remote pilot, but they must have evidence of competency if operating without the supervision of a competent remote pilot.

Under 18's will need someone to act as their Operator and be registered with the UK CAA.

VISUAL LINE OF SIGHT



You must operate your aircraft within visual line of sight (VLOS). If flying using first person view, you must have a competent observer next to you who maintains VLOS with your aircraft. Special rules apply to FPV drone racing within a 'sterile area'.

Free flight aircraft must not be deliberately flown beyond VLOS.

MANNED AIRCRAFT



You must do everything possible to avoid conflict with any manned aircraft.

It is illegal to fly any unmanned aircraft (except control line) within a Flight Restriction Zone (FRZ) around an airport/airfield without permission (see our guidance for details).

To ensure that you are not operating within an FRZ or airspace subject to restrictions, please check the UAS Restrictions Map at <https://nats-uk.ead-it.com/>

Endangering the safety of a manned aircraft could result in a five-year prison sentence.

IF THINGS GO WRONG



The law requires the reporting of certain occurrences:

- » Serious accidents and incidents to the AAIB.
- » Serious incidents and a range of other occurrences (including breaches of the terms of our Authorisation) to the CAA.

The BMFA has made this process as easy as possible: <https://reporting.bmfa.uk/>

HOW HIGH CAN I FLY?



The height limit for all unmanned aircraft is 400ft (120m) above the terrain in UK Regulation (EU) 2019/947.

BMFA members may operate:

- » Model aircraft above 400ft (excluding multi-rotors) which weigh less than 7.5 Kg.
- » Sail planes over 7.5 Kg, (but not exceeding 14kg), up to 400ft above the pilot (rather than the terrain).

Model aircraft weighing more than 7.5 Kg must not be flown higher than 400ft without permission from the BMFA.

FLY SAFELY



You must not endanger the safety of any uninvolved person or any vessel, vehicle or structure not under your control when you fly your unmanned aircraft.

Under the BMFA's Authorisation, for aircraft and drones under 7.5kg, do not fly within:

- » 30m of uninvolved people
- » 30m horizontal distance from an assembly of people.

The distance can be reduced to 15m for take-off and landing in some circumstances.

For aircraft and drones over 7.5kg (or any aircraft operated by FPV) do not fly within:

- » 30m of uninvolved people.
- » 50m horizontal distance from an assembly of people.

Flying within 'built up areas' is only permitted subject to the conditions outlined in our guidance.

www.bmfa.org / www.britishdroneflyers.org

LIGHTWEIGHT AIRCRAFT



An Operator ID is required for any model aircraft or drone over 100g with a camera, or for any aircraft or drone over 250g regardless of a camera.

A Flyer ID is required for anyone flying a model aircraft or drone over 100g.

Evidence of competency is required to operate within the BMFA's Authorisation. Alternatively, you may operate within the UK Open Category requirements - defined in UK Regulation (EU) 2019/947.

ARTICLE 16 BENEFITS



Our Article 16 Authorisation covers flying for sport, recreation, education and demonstration, and includes special arrangements for:

- » Trial flights for non-members.
- » Visiting flyers/competitors from overseas.
- » Display flying.
- » Permitting flights above 400ft with aircraft over 7.5Kg

For further details, please see the full guidance.

All Article 16 Authorisations exclude any flying for commercial purposes, however, our membership insurance does cover commercial flying in the UK Open Categories and is compliant with EC785/2004.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE



The BMFA have a team of dedicated full-time staff.

Call us for support:
Email us your questions:

0116 244 0028
admin@bmfa.org



BMFA

The British Model Flying Association



The BMFA are the only UK association recognised by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, the Royal Aero Club and Sport England as the 'Official Governing Body for the Sport of Model Aircraft and Drone Flying'.

Our unbeatable membership benefits include:

- » **Market leading £25m public liability insurance** with worldwide cover and no excess for recreational flying.
- » **£1m Fully UK EC785/2004 compliant commercial cover** for flying in the UK CAA Open Categories.
- » Access to fly under our **CAA Article 16 Authorisation** for increased recreational flying options.
- » The BMFA News emailed out to you 4 times a year (a printed subscription option is available).
- » Access to the UK's most popular model aircraft classified adverts service.
- » Access to members only rewards schemes where you can save much more than the cost of membership every year.
- » Opportunities to attend and compete in model aircraft and drone flying events and competitions.
- » Options to register with the CAA through our membership process to simplify everything in one place.
- » Access to a comprehensive network of instructors and examiners to assist your flying journey.
- » Access to an extensive range of guidance material to help members have fun, fly safely, and remain within the law.
- » Support and advice from dedicated full-time staff.
- » Peace of mind that we will represent you and the model and drone flying community at the highest levels globally.

All this and much more for less than 14p a day!