

Article 16 Operator Numbers

As of 31/12/2020 the law in relation to flying of model aircraft has changed significantly.

The best advice I can offer members is to read the legislation and understand it. If you read it, break it down and understand it, in the main we can continue as we did before with a few subtle changes.

If you do not know what the law is or understand it, you are going to struggle to comply with it and risk causing harm to others and possibly invalidating your 3rd party insurance cover, by flying unlawfully.

Most model flying clubs will fly under a document called Article 16 (links below). This is a legal document containing the rules and regulations that govern what we can and cannot do. In essence it means people who are current members of certain model aircraft associations, like the BMFA, can fly under terms and conditions that better suit their purposes.

[**BMFA Article 16 Detailed Guide**](#)

[**CAA Article 16 Full Document**](#)

The CAA Operator number requirement has been in force since 30th November 2019. The question is do you need one. The answer is mainly 'Yes' with a few exemptions. It is the number you paid £9.00 for and you must put on your aircraft. They last for 1 year from the date you obtain them, and it is up to you to renew it. The numbers look something like this.

Old Style: OP-JYYNND678

New Style: GBR-OP-DFHK77HG123NF

The new style number starting with GBR will replace the old-style number as people renew. It could take up to November 2021, for everyone to be issued with the new style number and yes once you get it, you must re-number your aircraft.

The Operator I.D. number must be clearly displayed on the aircraft or within a compartment that can be easily accessed without the use of a tool. The lettering must be at least **3mm high and in block capitals**.

In general terms you need to display an Operator number on any aircraft you fly, that weigh over 250 grams (control line aircraft were excluded but that has now changed depending on their weight).

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There are a few changes to the legislation under Article 16 and it now includes some control line aircraft and any aircraft fitted with a camera.

You need to display a CAA Operator number on any aircraft you fly outdoors unless:

- the aircraft weighs 250g or less and is not fitted with a camera; or
- the aircraft is a control line or round-the-pole (tethered) aircraft that weighs 1Kg or less; or
- the aircraft is a 'toy' as defined in the EU Regulations (i.e. a product intended to be played with by children under 14, excluding any product with a combustion engine).

There is no requirement to register as an Operator if you only operate model aircraft indoors.

You must be aged 18 or over to register as an Operator and obtain a CAA Operator number. You can register as an individual or as organisation or business. In theory a club could obtain one number, and everyone could use that number. However, the person obtaining the number (The Operator), is responsible to make sure that everyone using it, is flying legally and responsibly. Would you want every member in your club using your number and you being responsible for them? I doubt it, let them get their own number.

A parent aged 18 or over can obtain a number for a child aged under 18, but once again they are responsible to ensure the child flies safely and legally.

At PANDAS we do have a club Operator number which can be used by a visitor who did not have a number or a child under 18 who cannot obtain one. The number is registered to the club, but I am the person responsible for its use and it can only be used with my permission or by someone I have nominated on my behalf, such as a club committee member or instructor. Ultimately, I am responsible for ensuring that any person using the number flies safely and legally.

How Do I get One?

There are 2 main ways to get a CAA Operator number. You can go to the CAA website (link below) and get one directly from them. You fill in some basic details online, name, address, register with your email

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address, pay the £9.00 fee and the number is emailed directly back to you.

<https://register-drones.caa.co.uk/>

You can get them from the BMFA through the BMFA membership portal (link below).

<https://bmfa.org/Join-Renew/Join-the-BMFA>

Initially it could take a few weeks to receive your number if you went through the BMFA, but I believe that is now reduced to a few days.

Which is the best way? It is up to you, the BMFA encourage members to obtain it via their membership portal. A one stop shop you could say, with your BMFA membership.

I like to be in control of my own destiny and got mine direct from the CAA. It was quick and I got the number straight away.

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