

British Neuroscience Association- position on organoids (July 2026)

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics' 2026 report confirms what many researchers in this field already know from experience: Although care should be taken not to overstate their potential (e.g., they are not 'brains' and can't 'think' or 'behave'), neural organoids are a valuable and fast-developing research tool. While current regulation is appropriate, there are important gaps in our knowledge and approaches that should be addressed so that, as organoid complexity increases, researchers are in a strong position to shape and respond to changes. The BNA's draft position is:

- **No new primary legislation is needed right now.** The Nuffield Council's assessment that current models lack the complexity associated with sentience is consistent with the evidence, and a proportionate, non-statutory approach is right for the present.
- **There are issues to address so that future research can progress.** UK researchers, institutions, biobanks and funders should not wait for legislation that may be years away. Several practical safeguards are achievable now.
- **The BNA has a direct role to play.** The BNA should be an active contributor to the development of positions, ensuring that future discussions on the governance of organoid use includes the voice of British neuroscience.
- **This is a living position.** We will review it at least annually, and sooner if triggered by government scoping work, material scientific advances, or significant international regulatory developments.

Our six positions	What researchers should do now
Defining use cases and limitations BNA be involved in defining clear use cases for organoids, as well as current limitations. Legislation We support government scoping flexible frameworks now, for swift use later, but do not think that current evidence warrants introduction of formal legislation. Best-practice alliance BNA will seek a seat at the Council's proposed sector alliance. Consent, animal welfare, overseas tissue BNA will support proportionate review now, ahead of formal guidance. Public engagement BNA supports funder-led UK engagement; encourage this through others Monitoring & registers BNA supports this in principle, but only if kept light-touch and proportionate. Communication & terminology BNA strongly supports this; links to our Credibility in Neuroscience work.	Log your projects record organoid-related work with your institution's governance team now. Use consensus terms follow 2022 nomenclature; avoid "mini-brain" / "intelligence in a dish." Flag for extra scrutiny complex, connected, or early-implanted models should get extra REC review. Update consent forms name realistic organoid-related future uses explicitly. Talk to your AWERB raise transplantation/biocomputing work ahead of the Home Office update. Check overseas requests verify intended use meets UK standards before releasing material.