



Trustee Information Pack

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Closing date for applications:
5pm on 8th January 2026

Interviews:
Week of 19th January 2026



Welcome

A message from our Chair

Dear Prospective Trustee,

It is an incredible privilege to serve as Chair of a charity so grounded in its purpose and powered by such a passionate community.

The PDA Society was born from lived experience and driven by a shared belief that things can be different — and must be better — for PDAers and their families. That belief continues to guide everything we do.

In recent years, we have made bold strides: supporting thousands of people through our enquiry line, launching our most ambitious research to date, growing our fundraising and training activities, and developing partnerships that are helping us extend our reach and deepen our impact.

Yet the scale of unmet need remains significant — and so does our determination to close that gap. We know that when PDAers and their families are truly understood, when they're met with empathy, tailored support, and respect, it transforms lives.

As we look to the future, we are strengthening our governance and widening the perspectives and skills on our Board. We are looking for new Trustees who share our passion and values, and who can help us steer the next phase of our journey — ensuring that our organisation continues to thrive and that our community remains at the heart of all we do.

Our vision is simple but powerful: a world where PDA is no longer misunderstood, where PDAers and their families are recognised, heard, and supported.

If that vision resonates with you, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Warm regards,
Sally Cairns

Chair of Trustees
The PDA Society



What we do?

The PDA Society is the only UK charity focused specifically on the PDA profile of autism. Our mission is to improve the lives of PDA children, PDA adults and their carers, and families. We have been a charity for 9 years. Before that we were a parent support group, first established in 1997.



Our work uses published research and lived expertise from PDAers, family members and clinicians to build understanding and support for PDAers and everyone in their lives.

What is PDA?

What is PDA?

The term PDA stands for Pathological Demand Avoidance. This is widely understood to be a profile found within some autistic people. PDA isn't a diagnosis, but during an autism assessment a person can be identified as having a PDA profile. This may be described in paperwork by saying a person 'has a PDA profile', or that they have 'demand avoidance traits'.

In autism research and clinical practice, a 'profile' refers to a pattern of characteristics (traits/behaviours) that shape how an individual experiences and responds to the world. People with the same 'profile' can be very different from each other but will share some common experiences. To have a PDA profile you will likely have most or all of the 'characteristics' of PDA and you will also share some characteristics with the wider autistic population. PDAers benefit from being supported by specific approaches, many of which would also benefit the wider autistic population, and some which are particular to this profile.



There isn't enough research into the prevalence of PDA for us to make a confident assessment of population numbers, but the sole published research in this area suggests that prevalence could be as high as 1 in 5 autistic people. PDA can have a profound impact on people's lives, making everyday tasks impossible. Everyone's experience is different and what helps one person may not work for another. Without the right support, many people find themselves unable to achieve their potential, trapped in lives that are restricted and deeply unhappy.

At the PDA Society, our focus is on making life easier for PDAers, their families and everyone affected by demand avoidance. We are building awareness and understanding around PDA and demand avoidance by providing information, training, and personalised support to everyone who needs it.

Our Values

We have a deep understanding about how PDA can affect people's lives and are committed to making things easier for people. For many, the lack of understanding and support is an emergency, so we are in a hurry to make things better.

Here is how our values help us commit to doing that.

We understand

Our team is made up of neurodivergent people and parents, carers and family members of PDAers, our personal experience means we really get how challenging life can be.

We listen

We are committed to listening to PDAers, people who struggle with demand avoidance and everyone in their lives. We work hard to understand what matters most to people and to ask the right questions.

We work together

We believe everyone has a role to play in making life easier. We bring professionals and researchers together with neurodivergent people and their families to share learning and make sure everyone's voice is heard.

We are human

We care deeply about making a difference, and we bring compassion, connection and honesty to everything we do. When we do get it wrong, we own up, learn and focus on what we can do better.

We are focused

As a small charity, we have to make tough decisions about how we use our limited resources to create the greatest impact. We're transparent about our decisions, balancing individual needs with helping as many people as we can, as quickly as possible. Every action we take is to make a meaningful difference, as quickly and effectively as possible, because we know life can and should be better—soon.

Trustees at the PDA Society

We're looking to appoint two new Trustees to our Board following the retirement of two Trustees, and we're keen to broaden the range of skills and experiences represented.

Trustees play a key role in providing strategic direction, oversight, and support to ensure that the PDA Society continues to grow sustainably and deliver real impact for the community we serve. Our work is guided by people with lived experience, and our Board of Trustees plays a central role in shaping our strategy and ensuring that our values are embedded across everything we do.

We particularly welcome applications from anyone who has experienced marginalisation due to their race or religion, as these voices are currently underrepresented on our Board.

Appointments are made on merit, and we are committed to creating a diverse, inclusive Board that truly reflects the communities we serve. This is a voluntary position, and Trustees are not remunerated, although reasonable expenses are reimbursed. Trustees are appointed for an initial 3-year term.

What the role entails:

Trustees are responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the PDA Society, ensuring that it is well managed, financially sound, and achieving its charitable purposes.

They act as critical friends to the Chief Executive and senior team — offering guidance, challenge, and expertise while maintaining a focus on the charity's long-term mission and impact.

Trustees collectively:

- Set and safeguard the organisation's vision, values, and strategic direction
- Monitor progress and performance against agreed plans
- Ensure effective use of resources and sound financial management
- Oversee compliance with legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements
- Support good governance, risk management, and transparency
- Act as ambassadors for the charity, helping to extend its networks and influence

Trustees are expected to actively contribute to the organisation's fundraising and profile-raising efforts, and to bring their expertise to discussions both at Board and committee level.

Time commitment and meetings

Our governance structure includes:

Four Trustee Board meetings per year (usually in May, August, November, and February)

We have two sub-committees – a Business Affairs Committee focusing on finance, fundraising, and operational matters and a Governance & Strategy Committee focusing on strategy, HR, services, and communications.

Each sub-committee meets four times a year, and Trustees are appointed to one committee in addition to the full Board.

Meetings are held virtually, with at least one in-person awayday each year.

Trustees should expect to commit the equivalent of around one day per month, including preparation time, meetings, and occasional ad-hoc discussions or events.



Who we are looking for

Who we're looking for:

We are particularly keen to appoint Trustees who can add strength in one or more of the following areas:

- Clinical expertise (e.g. psychology, psychiatry, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, or clinical governance)
- Marketing and communications
- Fundraising and income generation
- Digital transformation, AI or IT systems

An understanding of autism & PDA is desirable in all Trustees and essential in a Trustee bringing clinical expertise.

Key responsibilities for all Trustees:

- To ensure that the PDA Society has a clear vision, strategic objectives, and plans to achieve them
- To ensure that the PDA Society performs according to its strategic objectives
- To ensure that the PDA Society complies with all legal and statutory requirements
- To fulfil your obligations as set out by the Charity Commission.
- To ensure that the PDA Society's governance complies with best practice
- To ensure that the PDA Society's policies and procedures are compliant with our obligations
- To actively contribute to the organisation's fundraising efforts

Personal characteristics:

- The ability to operate strategically, and to ask good questions without getting unnecessarily stuck on small details
- The ability to communicate clearly and take an active role in discussions, challenging sensitively and constructively, and maintaining a level head in difficult situations
- Focus and enthusiasm to deliver on the PDA Society's vision and mission
- An open mind and willingness to learn

How to apply

How to apply

Applying to be a Trustee at the PDA Society is simple. Please complete the application form and send it across to our HR & Operations Manager recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk before the deadline. The form can be found [here on our website](#).

We have tried to streamline the application process as much as possible but please do let us know if there is anything we can do to make the application more accessible.

For an informal discussion with the CEO about this role, please contact recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk or to talk with another Trustee please contact hilary.harvey@pdasociety.org.uk

You will be asked to submit your application form with whatever information you think we need in order to shortlist your application. A CV is not required. Your application will be reviewed by two of PDA Society's Trustees and they will recommend those they feel fit our criteria for interview.

The interview will be carried out by two Trustees (one of whom won't have been involved in shortlisting) with the CEO in attendance to answer any operational or technical questions you may have.

The interview panel will then recommend to the whole board those individuals who they think will make best contribution and impact on our Board. There may be a further face-to face meeting, and then the Board will vote and the applicants will be notified of the result.

Application deadline: 5pm 8th January 2026

Interviews: Week commencing 19th January 2026

Our Trustee board wants to make sure there are a range of opinions when we make decisions about our work and are keen to find new Trustees with differing perspectives and experience. We are open to skilled, enthusiastic, useful people whatever their background.

Contact us

www.pdasociety.org.uk

recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk