



# Search for our new CEO

## Information pack

- Salary for FTE: £62,000 - £75,000 dependant on experience
- 38 hours a week over 5 days (flexibility for right candidate)
- Home-based with travel for events and meetings
- 25 days' annual leave plus 8 bank holidays
- 4% employers' contribution to pension (up to 6% with increased employee contributions)
- Reporting to the Board of Trustees
- Direct Reports: Training & Consultancy Manager, Support Service Manager, People & Operations Manager, Head of Income Generation & Marketing

Closing date for applications:  
Midnight on 22nd April 2026

Interviews with Trustees:  
April / May 2026

In order to manage the application process smoothly we will be reviewing applications as they come in, and may begin interviews before the closing date. We commit to reviewing all applications received before the closing date and ensuring our process is fair and equitable to applicants.



# A message from our Chair

To our new CEO,

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 is driven by an incredible team with 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've made bold strides: supporting thousands of people through our enquiry line, launching our most ambitious research to date, growing fundraising and training impact, and developing partnerships that are helping us extend our reach and deepen our impact. Nonetheless, the scale of unmet need remains significant — and so does our determination to close that gap.

We are excited to hear from candidates who share our passion and values, are seeking a new challenge and would thrive working with a highly supportive team and Board of Trustees to make positive change happen. We are friendly, passionate, ambitious and tenacious. If that sounds like you, we'd absolutely love to hear from you.

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, we are keen to hear from you.

Warm regards,  
Sally Cairns

Chair of Trustees  
The PDA Society

# A message from our outgoing CEO

If you are reading this then – congratulations – you are considering applying for what I think is one of the most rewarding roles in the sector. And I should know as I've been doing it for the last three years! So what is so great about being the CEO of the PDA Society?

## The cause

You might be new to the term Pathological Demand Avoidance – but once in the role you'll soon learn that there are a group of autistic people who are having a particularly difficult time, and whose needs are so ill understood that it can be near impossible for them to get the support they need to thrive. You can read about those experiences [here](#) and [here](#).

The great news is that making a real difference to PDAers and their families is doable. Through our training, support services and the research and influencing the PDA Society is making change happen every day.

## The team

Our team (both of employed staff and trustees) is almost entirely made up of PDAers and people with experience of caring for and supporting them. What this means is you'll be stepping into a skilled and motivated team who really know what they are talking about.

For me working alongside this team has been a highlight of my time as CEO. They are caring, funny, incredibly hard working and they put making a difference ahead of ego or status – and that means that cross team working happens pretty seamlessly. They are genuinely a joy to work with.

## The opportunity

We've spent the last couple of years refreshing the brand and the business model so that we are in a good place to continue to grow to increase our impact. The foundations are in place to allow us to scale up our training offer and grow fundraised income so we can continue to meet the growing need for the work we do. For an entrepreneurial CEO this is a unique opportunity to oversee a rapid uptick in both income and impact using proven products in innovative new ways.

There is so much to love about this job. I've had a brilliant time here – so if you think this might be the right role for you I'd wholeheartedly encourage you to apply.

Elizabeth (Ed) Archer, CEO

# What is PDA?



Research suggests that PDA is a profile of autism. This is a combination of traits and experiences which mean that someone is likely to have similar strengths and challenges to other people with the same profile.

One of the most well-known features of a PDA profile is demand avoidance. This is when a person finds it hard or impossible to carry out everyday tasks or demands, even if these are things they need or want to do. Other features of PDA include use of social strategies to avoid demands, having a particular relationship style in which safe people are very important, and experiencing strong and changing emotions. PDAers often use imagination and creativity to support them to manage the challenges they face.

While research suggests that PDA is experienced by autistic people, we know from community research that not everyone who self-identifies as PDA considers themselves to be autistic. We fully respect people's right to self-identify if they find what works for them.

PDA can have a profound impact on people's lives, making even 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 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.

We want to see a world where PDA is better understood, so that everyone can get the understanding and support they need to thrive.

# About the PDA Society

The PDA Society is the UK charity focused on improving the lives of PDA children, PDA adults and their families through understanding, support, advocacy, and system change.

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 10 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.

In recent years the organisation has undergone a significant period of development and modernisation. Major achievements include:

- Expansion of support services and community reach
- Development of new training products and digital learning platforms
- Strengthening of communications, website and brand
- Growth in policy engagement and public awareness of PDA
- Investment in organisational systems, governance and sustainability

# 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'.

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.

# 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.

# About the role and our team

## Our team and governance structure:

We have a fabulous team of 22 staff and 27 volunteers who support our work. The CEO has 4 direct reports as follows:

- Training & Consultancy Manager
- Service Manager
- People & Operations Manager
- Head of Income Generation & Marketing

We have nine Trustees who bring a variety of experience, some of whom have been involved for many years and have considerable lived experience of PDA. Trustees meet formally at four 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.

## The role:

Reporting into the Board of Trustees, we are seeking an inspirational CEO for the PDA Society, who can lead with humility and curiosity, empowering and supporting our staff along the journey. They will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the charity and its staff and volunteers, and will oversee the development of our training products, research and support services, whilst ensuring sustainable growth in impact and income.

This is a fantastic opportunity to join a trusted enterprise within the PDA community with a strong mission and a committed, values driven team. The successful candidate will be passionate about improving the lives of PDAers and their families. You will be energetic, creative and bring new ideas for enhancing the charity's reputation, through nurturing existing relationships and developing new ones to achieve the charities goals. Our ideal candidate will have lived experience of autism, PDA or other neurodivergence although this is not essential.

# Key Responsibilities

The CEO for The PDA Society will have the following key responsibilities:

## Governance

- Leading governance to ensure charity complies with charity articles and regulation
- Working with the Chair and Trustee Board to ensure Trustees fulfil their legal obligations
- Working with the Chair and Trustees to recruit Trustees according to skills required, and that effective governance, subcommittees, safeguarding and Board development is in place
- Managing and mitigating operating and strategic risks
- Ensure effective operational policies, procedures and processes are in place, and that these meet legal, regulatory and best practice requirements – including those for employment, technology, GDPR, safeguarding and health & Safety.

## Strategy

- Setting and implementing the vision and strategy of the PDA Society, ensuring the financial security of the charity and playing a key ambassadorial role with funders and other stakeholders
- Leading the business plan and budget setting for approval by Trustees, and ongoing monitoring against objectives
- Strengthening the charities' ability to improve the lives of PDAers and their families through: high quality support services; trusted information and resources; professional training and education; effective advocacy through research and policy engagement

## Fundraising

- Overseeing our fundraising strategy, developing a stable and diversified income
- Managing the execution of fundraising plans and initiatives
- Driving and overseeing effective partnerships
- Overseeing mechanics and systems used to collect and analyse data and building business case for investment as required
- Manage relationships with key supporters and donors

## Financial Control

- Maintain effective financial management and control systems; ensure delivery within budgets and to performance targets and oversee production of management accounts, statutory accounts and annual reports
- Oversee the financial management of the charity ensuring all statutory obligations are met and monthly payroll is undertaken within agreed time periods

# Key Responsibilities cont and experience required...

## Marketing and Communications

- Lead The PDA Society brand proposition and key messaging
- Oversee all content development ensuring excellent quality output including website, social media channels, training hub, podcasts, partner materials, PR and CRM
- Overseeing systems development ensuring simplicity and building business cases for investment as required
- Collaborating with internal stakeholders to drive employee engagement

## Team Management

- Demonstrate strong personal leadership whilst building good team relationships and effective cross-team communication and working practices
- Responsible for ensuring continuous employee development, performance management and conflict resolution
- Oversee recruitment and new employee/contract offers ensuring agreed processes are adhered to
- Recommend team remuneration and benefits packages to the Board
- Identify risk and develop recruitment / succession plans to ensure team capacity is realistic and not over-stretched.

## Experience and characteristics:

- Leadership experience in a similar sized charity with experience working in organisations driven by social purpose, support services, community need or lived experience
- Experience working collaboratively with boards, trustees or equivalent governance structures
- Track record of growing sustainable income through creative and innovative approaches to fund raising, partnerships and income-generating services
- Experienced and comfortable in managing budgets, financial risk and organisational performance
- Proven experience in developing high performing, collaborative teams, inspiring trust and delivering results
- A positive, self-motivated, and driven leader who can energise the PDA Society and its staff through its next phase of development

# Key Responsibilities cont and experience required...

- Experience how to get the most out of tech platforms that underpin the support we provide to our PDA communities (Facebook, email, online learning, online content, etc), including how we leverage AI would be a brilliant asset
- Excellent communication to a range of stakeholders with the ability to adapt to different audiences including: families, professionals, policymakers, corporate partners and supporters
- Knowledge of autism, neurodiversity or related field would be an advantage

## YOUR PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR

- Motivated by results
- Comfortable with ambiguity
- Adaptable
- Strategic
- Evidence focused
- Respectful and supportive

## YOUR SKILLS

- Strategic vision
- Digital and tech savvy
- Planning and organising
- Workflow management
- Creative problem solving
- Analysis
- Numeracy and budgeting

## Compensation and benefits:

The role is a full-time role based on 38 hours per week. We are a remote working team but there is budget for in-person meetings and a good culture around connection and community.

The PDA Society is offering an attractive compensation package comprised of the following salary and benefits:

- £62k - £75k dependant on experience (negotiable for the right person)
- 38 hours a week over 5 days (flexible for the right person)
- 3 months' notice
- Home-based with travel for events and meetings
- 25 days annual leave plus 8 bank holidays
- 4% employers' contribution to pension (up to 6% with increased employee contributions)

# Application process - stage 1

The application process is broken down into two stages. If you have any questions about the role, or process or need additional guidance to complete this application, please contact [recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk).

Applicants must be eligible to live and work in the UK.

## Stage 1

Please send a cover letter and a CV that outline the skills and experience you have that help show you meet the requirements for the role. Your application doesn't need to be too detailed at this stage. Your cover letter and CV should be no more than 4 sides of A4 in length, and to make reading accessible we ask that type should be no smaller than 12pt.

We have tried not to specify where you will have gained your experience because we would like to see applications from anyone who has the ability to do this job. You do not need a university degree (or any other specific qualifications) for this role. If you can show that you are able to do the job by referencing experiences you've had in previous jobs, your lived experience, or working collaboratively in an informal way then please tell us about that.

We are a disability confident charity who are committed to fairness. We are keen to build a team that is representative of and supportive to everyone in the PDA community so actively encourage applications from people who bring different experiences and perspectives to the team.

Two people will independently and without discussion review your application. Once this is done, they will meet to discuss their scoring.

If you are shortlisted, you will be invited to interview.



In line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, we also ask all applicants to complete our anonymous demographic monitoring form, which is kept entirely separate from your application. Please see the link here to complete the form: [demographic monitoring form](#).

# Application process - stage 2

If you are not shortlisted you will receive an email which outlines how many applicants there were for the role and what made shortlisted candidates stand out. As a small organisation we do not have capacity to give individual feedback to every applicant- but hope that the overview reflects how grateful we are for the time invested in applications, and is useful to you in future job seeking.

## Stage 2 - Interviews

If you are invited for interview, we will ask if there are any adjustments you would like us to make to give you the best possible chance to do well. The first and second interviews will take place online.

You will be sent a briefing about what the interview will involve, who will be there and some questions we will ask on the day. You will also be sent a short presentation briefing in advance of the second interview which will help us understand the practical skills you'll bring to the role. We will provide the opportunity for you to get to know us, and encourage you to ask questions at every stage of the process.

We envisage a final face-to-face interview with our preferred candidates with interviews being complete in May.



We are a Disability Confident organisation committed to fairness and to building a diverse, representative team. If you choose to share information about experiences of structural inequality, the scoring team will actively consider how to ensure this does not disadvantage you. We warmly encourage applications from people whose backgrounds and experiences can help us better support the PDA community.

Thank you for reading our information pack. We look forward to receiving your application: [recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk).

# Contact us

[www.pdasociety.org.uk](http://www.pdasociety.org.uk)

[recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@pdasociety.org.uk)