

Surrey joint position statement: pathological demand avoidance

Surrey SEND vision:

Children and young people will be happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future.

Aims:

We believe that the best outcomes for children and young people with high support needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities are secured by working together in an honest and effective partnership which includes families, the voluntary and community sector, education, social care and health. We want children, young people and their families to have a good experience of the support system, including at key transition points. We want them to be confident in the system, knowing that they will be listened to and that it will provide what is needed in a timely fashion. Children, young people and their families will play a key role in decision making around identifying and meeting their needs. We aim to enable every child and young person to contribute and achieve more than they thought possible.

What is pathological demand avoidance?

Many people have asked us about pathological demand avoidance (PDA). Perhaps the best way of thinking about PDA is as a way of describing a range of anxiety driven behaviours where the child or young person seeks to talk their way out of or avoid everyday seemingly reasonable requests, to an extent that this demand avoidant behaviour can become debilitating for the young person. At the same time, the child or young person does not respond to the traditional strategies recommended for autism. This set of behaviours may be termed pathological demand avoidance and in some areas of the country, young people may even receive a separate diagnosis of PDA.

PDA does not appear as a separate diagnostic condition in nationally and internationally recognised diagnostic manuals such as DSM-V or ICD-10. For this reason, NHS professionals in Surrey do not make this separate diagnosis. However, we do recognise that this profile of behaviours exists and that often the children and young people respond better to a more flexible and non-confrontational set of personalised strategies.





For more detail, the Autism Education Trust has published guidelines, supported by the Department for Education, on the distinctive clinical and educational needs of children with the PDA profile in its 'National Autism Standards'.

Autism statement

We are committed to supporting all children and young people with autism. Autism is an umbrella term that describes a range of conditions, some of which you may have heard described as Asperger's syndrome, high functioning autism, social communication disorder, pervasive development disorder or pathological demand avoidance. We recognise that each individual has a unique set of needs and strengths which we will support with a coordinated partnership approach across the voluntary and community sector, education, social care and health.

Supporting organisations

Surrey County Council
Surrey Collaborative Clinical Commissioning Groups
Surrey Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - Surrey and Borders
Partnership
Positive Autism Support and Training
Family Voice Surrey

