Police Station Supporters (PSS)

Role of Police Station Supporters (PSSs)

- Greet and emotionally support arrestees as they leave the police station.
- Ensure that personal details from arrestees, including about their arrest and release, are collected via XR's online ArrestWatch system.
- Ensure the welfare of arrestees, eg by offering something to eat and drink, and by offering advice or other assistance in getting back to base, or if this is not possible, advice on where to find overnight accommodation.
- Provide information to arrestees about what to do next and the practical, legal and emotional support available via XR.
- Gather on-the-ground information, eg about how many arrestees are being held in the station.
- Liaise with XR Back Office, via the Police Station Support Coordinator (PSSC) for the relevant station.

Becoming a PSS

There's no recruitment process: everyone's welcome to help with this rewarding task and we can almost always use more supporters. Our arrestees often mention how much they appreciated seeing a friendly face when they emerged from the police station.

Training for PSSs

As well as reading the guidelines below, you can watch these videos: Short (20mins) or Long (54mins). As these are slightly out-of-date, updates are summarized in this Google doc.

Resources needed by PSSs

- A smartphone with WhatsApp installed, and possibly Signal, depending on the geographical area.
- A portable charger
- Access to XR's Police Station map
- For arrestees
    - Link to XR's on-line post-release form: https://arrestwatch.info/pss

    - Hand sanitizer, wipes
    - Food and drink, eg sealed bottles of water; flasks of hot drinks; snacks (preferably vegan, and if possible avoiding allergens such as nuts)
    - Basic first-aid equipment, eg plasters, paracetamol (sealed and labelled)
    - Up to date transport information, local taxi numbers
    - Information about any emergency overnight accommodation available (from the PSSC)
    - Cash to lend to arrestees if needed.
- For yourself:
    - XR identifiers (eg badge) to help arrestees find you
    - Camping chair & blanket /warm clothes/umbrella (police station waiting rooms aren't always accessible)
    - Refreshments
    - Reading material
    - Pen and paper
    - Information about procedures for claiming expenses from XR (see below)

Getting involved

Ideally, Police Station Supporters will have been able to prepare for the role. In practice, rebels often decide to offer support during a protest, for instance when friends are arrested, and that's cool too. Advice and help will be easily accessible, whether from fellow supporters, the Police Station Support Coordinator (PSSC) via the station WhatsApp/Signal group, or from Back Office.

Call-outs for PSSs are made as needed in XR's Arrestee Support WhatsApp groups (see below) and in the WhatsApp/Signal chats associated with the relevant stations.

People intending in advance to offer support are invited to join one of XR's three AS (Arrestee Support) WhatsApp groups. These are duplicate groups: ideally there'd be a single group but the maximum capacity of a WhatsApp group is less than the number of people we need to accommodate. So please join only one of the groups:

- AS 1
- AS 2
- AS 3

Identify from the Police Station map the stations you can access and join the relevant Station WhatsApp/Signal groups in advance. Get to know your local police station and the surrounding area. You'll may have to wait outside the station so plan accordingly. For example:

- Is there a waiting room, and if so, what are the opening times?
- Would you feel safe waiting outside the Police Station, especially overnight?
- What time do trains and buses run?
- Is there public parking near the police station?

- Location of nearest public loos
- Rebels wishing to support friends at a particular station should directly join the relevant Police Station WhatsApp/Signal group linked on the Police Station map.

Police Station (PS) groups

Joining links for all the Station groups are accessible from XR's Police Station Map. All these stations have a custody suite, apart from a few that are awaiting deletion from the map. During a mass resistance, arrestees tend to be taken to the larger stations, including some on the outskirts of London, rather than those with small custody suites. So to be ready to offer support, it's worth joining several PS groups as well as an AS group.

When no arrestees are being held at a Police Station, the settings of the related WhatsApp groups are intended to prevent posts other than by Admins, to avoid spamming. When we know arrestees are on their way, the station will be classified as 'active', a call-out will be made, and the group will be opened up so that supporters can respond to the call-out.

A Police Station Support Coordinator (PSSC), based in Back Office, will be associated with each WhatsApp/Signal group. The PSSC is responsible for creating a support rota; for liaising with supporters via the group chat; and for providing any information and advice they need.

Please use the group chat for communication with the PSSC where possible, rather than private messages - this can help to avoid confusion on the part of other supporters. In some circumstances, however, you'll need to exchange confidential information and should do so by private message or phone. In particular arrestees' names/contact details, and those of their family, should *never* be posted in the WhatsApp/Signal group.

The headers of some PS groups contain useful information about the station, eg position of exits, accessibility of waiting rooms. If you discover new information during your shift, please let your PSSC know, so that it can be recorded.

Your PSSC is there to help you, so please ask if you need anything.

PSS Shifts

You'll agree your shift with the PSSC. We aim to ensure continuous cover outside the PS, from around 4h after the first arrest to around 24h after the likely check-in time of the most recent arrestee.

Please try to arrive on time, or let the PSSC know if you're unavoidably delayed - the supporters before you may need to leave on time and we'll try to make arrangements to avoid a gap.

We aim to arrange for each PS to have at least two supporters at a time, or sometimes more depending on the number of exits from the station. Occasionally we can only recruit one supporter - if you prefer not to support alone, at all or at some times of the day/night, please let your PSSC know.

At the beginning of your shift, it can be helpful to confirm how many rebels are in custody. Your PSSC may suggest asking at the Custody desk, either by going in or via the outside phone. Officers don't have to tell you anything. They may ask for the names of the arrestees you're enquiring about: **do not give any information**: the arrestee may have decided to withhold their details.

Not everyone using the PS will be associated with XR: other arrestees may be leaving, as will police officers - some not in uniform. Supporters of other arrestees may be waiting; and occasionally there may be members of the press fishing for information about rebels. Without being antisocial, **share information with care**.

You may able to identify rebels' lawyers as they leave the station, and can then get useful information about the number of remaining XR arrestees - please pass this on to your PSSC.

Sometimes the Police will tell PSSs that the station is now empty. This might or might not be reliable - you should not accept any information at face value.

If you think the station is empty, inform your PSSC and they will advise you what to do.

If you feel unsafe at any time, please let your PSSC know.

Your point of contact is your PSSC, via the PS group: if they are unresponsive, or you need information they aren't providing, please contact A&LS Back Office on **07749 335574**.

Supporting Arrestees

You'll need to try to identify every arrestee as they're released, which isn't always as easy as it sounds. Rebels don't always have identifiers such as XR logos, and they may not be looking out for you. They may be released from a little-used exit, so it's important to ensure that the supporters can collectively see all the exits all the time. Officers sometimes give misleading information about the exits used for release: it's wise not to rely on their 'helpfulness'.

When you've identified an arrestee, remember that they've just been locked up for some time and in that situation, different people may want and need different things - so be sensitive, beginning with their emotional needs. Then move on to practical needs, and finally ensure that you elicit the information needed by XR to provide ongoing support.

Information about a rebel's release is collected in one or two ways: by the PSSs and/or via the on-line form.

- Ideally the information will be collected only once, via the on-line release form before the rebel leaves the PS: https://arrestwatch.info/pss. Please familiarize yourself with the information being requested. The form includes a requirement for the rebel to agree to XR's Privacy Policy under GDPR, and **must** be submitted by the rebel in person. If they don't have their own phone, it would be great if supporters could lend their phone so that the form can be completed.

- Sometimes rebels prefer not to complete the form straight away: in that case, please give them the link and ask them to fill it in later, so that XR can contact them to offer post-arrest support, including financial and legal support.
- If the release form isn't completed immediately, Back Office still needs to know that the rebel has been released. Please ask for their name, and communicate that by DM or phone to the PSSC. This helps us to judge whether the station is empty.

If it's not possible to give them the link, please ask then to contact xr-legal@riseup.net or xr-arrestwelfare@protonmail.com and ask for an on-line copy - these e-mail addresses are shown on the XR website.

Encourage arrestees to write up a statement about what happened at the time of their arrest, while it's still fresh in their mind. This is particularly important when there are concerns about police behaviour.

Sometimes arrestees are released late at night, and will be unable to get back to base. During a mass resistance, accommodation options may be available - please ask your PSSC.

The 7Fs may help you to remember what to do:

- **Friendly** and empathetic to the needs and emotions of the arrestee
- **First aid** and mental health support
- **Food and drink**, being conscious of dietary requirements
- **Fill** out the online release form (the arrestee needs to do this, not the PSS), or ensure they have a link to do so later
- **Future**: give them a link to the post-arrest handout
- **Finance**: ensure the arrestee has money for transport and somewhere to stay
- **Finish** by letting the PSSC know of the release (unless the arrestee has submitted the release form)

Appropriate Adults

The Police must ensure that a vulnerable person or a minor (under 18) is supported in custody by an Appropriate Adult. We encourage people who intend to get arrested and who need an Appropriate Adult to organize this for themselves, in advance, but sometimes this doesn't happen. In such a situation, the Police may ask the PSS to help with this role. You can fulfil this role if you wish, ensuring that there'll be adequate support left outside the PS, but should not feel under pressure to do so. If you become aware that officers are seeking an Appropriate Adult, tell them you'll consult XR for advice - otherwise, they may recruit someone from local Social Services, which is not always a good option for the arrestee.

PSS Expenses

XR is aware that the role of PSSs implicitly involves expenditure, eg on snacks for arrestees, and the possibility of needing to give money to arrestees for travel. We very much appreciate the

generosity of many supporters in freely providing food and drink, and sometimes more, for arrestees. We also recognize that some supporters are unable to contribute financially, and their in-person support is not less valued.

For those who need it, we have a limited pot of money that can be used to reimburse PSSs for things like snacks for arrestees; arrestees' travel (if they have no money and have to ask the PSS to help out); cost of a taxi for a vulnerable arrestee (should be discussed with your PSSC); and PSS travel if travelling beyond a local area (should be discussed with PSSC in advance).

For guidance on what is covered and how to claim, please ask your PSSC.

If you think you may need to make a claim from XR, please ask your PSSC for a link to the claim form; keep receipts where possible and make a claim within 24h, so that XR can keep track of claims and give fair warning if the money is all spent and refunds are no longer possible.

Thank you for your interest in Police Station Supporting! It's a rewarding role and we hope it will also be fun :)

(last updated 25 March 2022 - Source copy held on Next Cloud at: https://cloud.extinctionrebellion.uk/f/787574 (internal link))
