

Moderating a group chat

Hopefully, you'll never be in a tricky situation; but sometimes people can troll, spam or act against XR's Principles and Values on group chats. In general, this is less likely to happen on closed, secure chats, but it is a good idea to have 'agreed in advance' rules for this type of behaviour. It is important to make sure difficult or contentious situations don't escalate.

1. Always make sure there are at least three trusted admins to moderate the chat. Create a separate, private chat for these moderators, so there's a space for people to support each other in response to questions or queries. Take turns to do the moderation.
2. Name the chat and use the header/description to make it clear what the chat is and why people have been added. Make sure that only admins can add members or access the invite link by turning off the group link in settings (there is no group link in WhatsApp). Be aware of where the invite links are posted, e.g. don't add private invite links to websites or social media as spammers will find these and join your group chats.
3. Create a [group agreement](#). It is up to your group what rules you agree to, but it is best to ensure these rules are agreed to in advance. It also helps for rules to be the same on all platforms that you are using to communicate. Ensure that when people sign up to the group they are pointed to the group agreement so they know what they are agreeing to, or that they are shown it before joining the group. Link the group agreement from the chat header/description.
4. Welcome newcomers. Answer questions and make sure people feel heard. Regularly remind everybody of chat etiquette. Chatting informally to build momentum in the public chat is best done from personal accounts, rather than anonymous admins.
5. Block and report spammers. See [here](#) for how to manage spammers in Telegram.
6. Avoid posting sensitive action info, naming organisers or any info which can later be used as evidence. Also be aware that infiltration is common on open chats, so don't share anything that can be used against people as evidence.
7. If a member of the group keeps posting off-topic messages or dominating the space then respectfully ask them to stay on track, or switch to a more suitable channel. Create another space for them to be heard. If they continue, follow up with a direct message, or ultimately consider blocking them from the chat with an explanation. Make sure that moderators follow the policy and are ready to be challenged and justify removals.

8. If people leave the chat in response to a post, this is a sign of overheating - slow down, pause and reflect.
9. Follow a 'two strikes and you're out' policy. On the first occasion of 'misbehaviour' an admin should remove the person/people from the group, private message them to explain they have been removed, and calmly explain why (citing the rules you have agreed to). On the group chat itself that they have been removed from, explain that you have removed them from the group and why. If you have a group agreement in place most people will know the policy and know what will happen if there is bad behaviour on a group chat. You may decide in your group on a zero-tolerance policy for some misbehaviour.
10. Give the removed person a cooling-off period and discuss re-adding them to the group provided they are willing to follow the group agreement. Ideally, if the person is happy to apologise, and wants to be added back into the group then you can add them back in, on the basis that there is only one more chance. As we said, if this is covered in the group agreement policy in advance, and everyone knows what happens in a bad behaviour situation, then nobody should be upset about this. Once that person has been let back into the group, admins should ensure that ongoing conversations are monitored and enforce the 'two strikes and you are out policy'. If necessary, you may need to remove them from the group conversations permanently, and you may also want to assess whether or not you want them involved in the XR Local Group, Community Group, or Working Group at all.
11. Remember to [close unused chats](#) securely after their use is over.

Here are the [Mattermost Moderation Guidelines](#) used on public XRUK channels.
