Preparing for new volunteers

- Why do we need new volunteers?
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- What does an Integrator do?

Why do we need new volunteers?

New volunteers are the lifeblood of every group

Every group needs the energy, skills, ideas, community connections, diversity and fresh perspective new volunteers bring.

Bringing new volunteers into our groups can be time-consuming and hard work and sometimes a new volunteer quickly leaves again. At times like these, it is tempting to think "oh, we'll just do it all ourselves".

Without a continual flow of new people, a group can end up consisting of experienced but very stretched people with no time to show others how to do things. Then, when one of those experienced people needs to step back, things can get even harder. A healthy group has a mix of people of all levels of experience, with a steady flow of newbies learning, moving on to more complex work, showing others how to do things and relieving the more experienced coordinators of work.

Setting the tone

Before you even start recruiting or doing outreach, think about how you will look after the people when they arrive. New people will need extra care and attention at the start. It is best that coordinating this work falls to someone who is not frazzled from doing a ton of other things or is sharing by the group. This is a job for *everyone* in the team.

Of course, no one can guarantee that your volunteers will stick with you, but there are some things you can do to make it more likely. At a People's Assembly, XR volunteers were asked why they stayed. These answers came up the most:-

- we felt **appreciated**
- we felt **part of a community**
- we thought XR was **effective**

And we really felt part of XR when:-

- we **got to know people**
- we **worked together** on something
- we **got to know XR**
- we **gained a role** in our team

So, drawing from this, the kinds of things which encourage people to keep coming back include:-

- a friendly, non-cliquey environment where group members avoid XR jargon, take the time to explain things, check understanding and listen to the views and experiences of the new person
- a named 'buddy' (or buddies) who will look after the new person, answer questions and help them settle in
- asking if the new person has anything they need to take part or feel comfortable and trying to meet their needs wherever possible (see also Supporting your New Volunteer and How do we genuinely welcome everyone?)
- a tangible project the whole group can work together on
- a role, or maybe some simple task to start with, for the new person
- connections to people, projects or training you know the new person will find interesting
- evidence of the impact of the things you are doing (e.g. getting your local council to declare a climate and ecological emergency, getting good press coverage, having a successful event where you bring in more people etc)

If you can provide these things, then you will have gone a long way to making a supportive and welcoming environment for the new vounteers who arrive in your group.

Ways of Working

We also recommend that you read the Ways of Working guide for how we relate to each other in all teams across the UK.

How do we genuinely welcome everyone?

To genuinely welcome everyone we must be inclusive

For guidance on Inclusivity in XR, start here.

More useful resources:

- Inclusivity-disability Resources Pack
- Neurodiverse and disabled rebels inclusion pages of the toolkit.

You can contact Disabled Rebels Network via Facebook, or you can email them at **wellbeing+drn@exinctionrebellion.uk**

Rare exceptions

There are a few rare cases where you might not be able to include someone, i.e. if their needs are beyond what you can reasonably meet, or if they risk causing harm to other people *(see*

'Supporting your new volunteers').

What does an Integrator do?

It can be slightly overwhelming joining XR - so much to learn, so many new faces, all that XR jargon and even a new structure to work around.

And this is on top of the anger, frustration or desperation we feel because we face the global catastrophe of climate change, a result of systemic injustice and racial inequality, the effects of which are already being felt all over the world. It can be a lot to process.

And sometimes we forget to welcome new volunteers into XR, simply because we are often so involved in a project which is taking all our time and attention.

For this reason, we should have an Integrator in each of our teams and Local Groups (LGs) - to welcome new volunteers and to make sure that existing Rebels are finding their way on their journey through XR.

Check out the Rebellion Academy Module: Working Group roles, for some videos about being an Integrator.

Standard Integrator mandate

Purpose: to make sure that team/LG members are flourishing and productive and that the team/LG has members to fill its roles and support its workload.

Mandate:-

- inviting new members to join the team or LG roles;
- onboarding / inducting / orienting new members into the team/LG roles;
- keeping a list of team members up-to-date;
- requesting your group admin adds new members to the Hub, as required;
- checking in with team members about their fit with roles, projects and the team generally;
- suggesting improvements to who fills roles if necessary;
- if a transformative conflict process does not resolve an issue and if it is in the team's best interests, asking someone to leave the team *(rare circumstances)*; and
- for groups with a Volunteer Website account, managing the group account on the website, posting roles & dealing with role applications.

Different teams break this down differently (for example, you might have one person handling recruitment and a different one for onboarding) but someone will need to be responsible for each of the tasks listed above. Work out who will do what ahead of time so that everyone is clear what to expect.

Not got a team Integrator?

Then this is the first role to recruit for! You may think this person would need to know your team inside out in order to welcome others; but really the most important thing is for them to be friendly, empathetic and willing to learn as they go along. Sometimes, it even helps for the integrator to be relatively new so that they can use their own experience to help others. There are lots of resources on this toolkit to help them.

NB: If you haven't got an Integrator then it is the Internal Coordinator's job to do this work!

Cautionary note: *if you are using the volunteer website to recruit, it is important you get to know a new Integrator before giving them login details to your group account since this is a position of great trust and involves handling sensitive personal data.*