

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 shared 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 volunteers 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.
