

Welcoming new volunteers

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Building Onboarding into your Team

We know that one of the main reasons that volunteers stay with XR is that they find a community with us. So how can we ensure that we are as welcoming to as many people, and as many different people, as possible?

The Job of Welcoming

It is an integrator's job to find, contact and induct new volunteers into the team. It is the whole team's job to welcome them.

Make Sure:-

1. a team member steps up to have a 1-1 chat with the new volunteer in their first week!
2. a team member steps up to be the new Volunteer's "Point Person" or "Buddy" for their first few weeks, that single port-of-call if the new volunteer has any questions*; and
3. the team invites the new volunteers to any social gatherings coming up or any activities they may wish to join.
 - **(This is especially important if you organise in multiple chats, ensuring they know what's happening)**

***A buddy is vital for helping new members to feel welcome and find their feet!**

The buddy's role/responsibility is:

- To make initial contact in the form of a friendly email, introducing yourself, possibly offering to meet for coffee or have a call
- To properly welcome them into XR by answering their questions, and allaying any fears they might have about getting more involved
- To generally be a friendly voice on the end of a phone and support them in finding their own place in XR

Some ideas for how a buddy can support a new XR volunteer:

- General meetups in a café to chat about their interests in XR, ask how they would like to be involved

- Inviting your buddy to a meeting that you are going to; you'll be the friendly person already there, so they won't have to go into a room of strangers
- Introducing your buddy to other XR people who are in areas that your buddy is interested in (art, media, outreach, performance actions)
- If they are ready to become involved, invite your buddy onto your local telegram group

As the Integrator, do think about how the local group will keep track of who is buddying whom.

New Volunteer in the Chat!

When a new volunteer is added to your chat (Mattermost, Signal, Telegram...) make sure to say Hi and welcome them. Make sure they know the purpose of various chats and where they can ask for help.

A Volunteer's First Meeting

Do:-

1. ensure that the team has included their roles and pronouns in their screen names **or** start off with a round of names and role descriptions; and
2. have at least one person offer to stay behind to check in with the new Volunteer, see how they found their first meeting and if they have any questions.

Don't

1. use lots of acronyms and XR jargon! Try to have someone there to call people out on their jargon and ask them to define things.

Supporting your new Volunteers

Access needs

Find out about your new volunteer's access needs and any other ways they may need to be kept safe. These may include any disclosed disability that might affect their participation in our community (such as the use of assistive technologies to read emails and the web) as well as participation in events (such as physical access needs, mental-health issues and dietary or other invisible needs).

Gathering this information must always take account of someone's right not to disclose anything, as well as their need for proper support if they do disclose something.

You can find advice on ensuring that you support volunteers with access needs [in the Access and Inclusion section of the toolkit](#).

Keeping each other safe

Any organisation needs to keep its members safe, and we need to make sure that we know if anyone in our community might be classed as vulnerable. If you find any concerns related to a volunteer (whether about their needs or about their potential impact on other volunteers), you may need to draw up a support plan so that volunteers can be protected from anyone who might harm them, either deliberately or accidentally. You should draw up a support plan in consultation with the volunteer who is its focus, and assure them that we want them to take part and are aiming to provide them with the support they need to do this safely.

Where else can volunteers get support?

Please signpost your New volunteers to the pages [Care and Respect](#) and [Inclusivity](#) in the **Intro to XR**

Please check your New volunteers have read these and understand the behaviour they are expected to follow.

Inducting your new volunteers: Roadmap

1) Contact your new Volunteer (UK, Regional and National groups)

These are the people who have applied for your advertised role on the volunteer website or people you find on the database who seem a good fit for your team.

- Call them (emails don't work well as a first contact) and schedule a time to talk if they are busy. See [this page](#) for some tips about calling applicants.
- Make time for their grief and questions, ask about their experiences, tell them about your group and how you hope they might help you.

2) Send them some initial information

Not too much! It is easy to overwhelm people at this stage. This is all your volunteer needs at the outset:-

1. **Intro to XR - The Essentials.**
2. Your Team's mandate.
3. An invite to your next group meeting.
4. This Roadmap (optional) - it can help volunteers to see what to expect, and where they are in the induction process and to request the next steps proactively.

3) First Group Meeting

- Introduce them to other team members; give them contacts.
- Ensure they know the hand signals and the process.
- Read the Regenerative Reminder at the start of the meeting.
- Make sure to give space for questions.
- Have a post-meeting debrief- ask them how they felt their first meeting went and give space for any questions they have.

4) Induction / orientation

This will be tailored to your team and staggered according to your volunteer. It is best to let them absorb one thing before moving on to the next.

- More information about your group (optional) (keep it simple - preferably not a long reading list with lots of links!).
- Send details of the general **Welcome to XR Zoom call** (the **Rebellion Academy** introductory training covers similar ground, though without the personal connections and support).
- Ask them to look through **How We Work Together** (this is a long read though)
- If they are going to have access to other members' data [phone number, email address etc] it is important that they understand and sign **the Volunteer Agreement**
- Ask your team's Hub Group Admin to email them an **invite to the XRUK Hub** and add them to your Team on the Hub.
- Send them the **Using the Hub - the basics** page on the Rebel Toolkit. Encourage them to attend the **Tech Support Drop-ins** if they get stuck or signpost them to the **Rebellion Academy** training.
- Consider pointing new recruits towards the **Foundation Programme**, which will give them a really thorough grounding of skills, and a good understanding of how XRUK works. The programme comprises of Zoom trainings; selected reading and e-learning; and support, help and guidance from the course directors.

[Send your new team members this link to apply](#)

5) Direct them towards concrete tasks

Super important for volunteer retention! People are more likely to stick around when they feel valued and affirmed.

- Have a list of simple tasks that a new volunteer can take on easily e.g:
 - Leafleting
 - Paint the Streets: flyposting, chalk painting, stickering.....
 - [Supporting us on social media](#)
 - Talking to friends about the climate and ecological emergency and inviting them to a Welcome to XR session
 - Secretary-type stuff: taking notes, sending around action points etc
 - Emails: keeping on top of your inbox (they will need help to start)
- Share Action Points - if you've got too many things on your plate, ask them for help!

6) Check in, check progress

Try to have a weekly call with your new volunteers.

- Try to answer their questions and, if you can't, let them know who can.
- Try to gauge their understanding of XR and find out if there is anything they would like to learn about in more depth. If so, direct them to [Rebellion Academy](#) or [specific talks](#) /

trainings.

7) Invite them to a parent circle meeting (optional)

- This will help a new Volunteer see the XR structure from a different perspective and how information moves across the system.
- You do not have to be in the Circle meeting with them but, by this point, they should be well acquainted with the team External Coordinator so there will be a known face.

8) Final debrief / allocation of role

After about a month, most new Volunteers will feel like they have an understanding of XR and how things are structured. You have now shared your skills and contacts - this marks the end of your guidance!

Have a meeting to debrief;

- how was their experience, where do they want to go from here?
- Will you continue to share the mandate?
- Is there a way to split the mandate?
- Is there a gap within the team they would like to fill?
- Do they have a project idea of their own they would like to pursue within XR?

You should have built a good level of trust with a new Volunteer before asking them to take on roles that involve handling other people's data (e.g. mailing lists, an account on the volunteer website). Please make sure anyone taking on such a role has signed the **Volunteer Agreement** and understands the basic principles of data protection.

Every volunteer journey will have a slightly different conclusion; please take some time to reflect on your experience.