# Ways of Working

## Our approach, skills and capacities as we volunteer in XR UK

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## 1. Our shared understandings

### What volunteering with XR UK involves

- In order to be a rebel with XR UK, we always need to align our intentions and actions with our Principles & Values to get our demands met. This document outlines what acting in line with the Principles & Values means in practice. It can be seen as part of our move towards regenerative cultures, including how we care for ourselves and others, and how we work in ways that mirror the regenerative capacity of planet Earth.
- To be a member of one of the teams that has signed up to our Constitution (often referred to as the Self-Organising System, or SOS), you also need to:
  - follow the Constitution,
  - learn and respect our ways of working (which are outlined in this document), and
  - if you are in a role which involves handling personal data, sign the Volunteer Data Handling Agreement.
- We aim to be **transparent** in our organisation. This includes:
  - finances,
  - the work of specific groups (or circles), and
  - names of individuals involved.
- This makes it easier to hold each other to account and spreads out the power.

## How we make XR UK a regenerative space where all rebels can take part equitably

- We **welcome new people** and open our existing spaces to them where we can, based on the values of confidentiality and trust.
- We **take time to learn** how our use of language, our attitudes, our technologies and our approach affects how Rebels can participate in XR.
- We are respectful and considerate about each others' strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds.
- We **do not accept behaviours or language that discriminate** against any marginalised group.
- We understand that we are **constantly unlearning behaviours that don't meet needs** for safety and security. We understand that by trying new approaches there will be times when we need to change course.
- When we become aware that our Ways of Working are not being followed, we encourage Rebels to **call in (not call out) behaviours that don't meet needs** for safety and security. We do this **without blaming and shaming**; we are all learning. We call people in. We invite people to learn and do better. We include them in creating a new way of doing things. While calling out excludes people, calling in includes people.
- If you are being called in, **you are invited to accept the feedback as a gift** in this ongoing movement of growth and change. Be open to active listening. Try to learn awareness of defensiveness to make space for tension shifting and conflict resolution.
- **XR is an international and internationalist movement**. As the UK is a Global North / Western democracy we need to be aware of when our lens of experience is biasing our work, then take steps to broaden our view without burdening marginalised people with emotional labour. Given a context of continuing global inequality, (violent) oppression and discrimination, and the relative privilege that some in XR in the UK have regarding access to food, health, shelter, wellbeing and safety etc, rebels are invited to speak up and act

appropriately where possible to redress these inequalities in the service of harmony, healing, equity and connection. It is recognised that this inequality also impacts in the UK on account of socio-economic group and colour.
- We **seek to support those with less power in society by focusing on their needs**, rather than our own expectations or wants. The majority Global South face the worst impacts of climate and ecological breakdown and injustice. Given that we in the UK enjoy relative privileges which add to their suffering, we bear greater responsibility to mitigate impacts of climate and ecological genocide.
- We **recognise that accessibility and inclusion consists of more than physical accessibility**. It includes considering culturally neutral, sober spaces, along with practical considerations for creating inclusive spaces.
- We **ask about accessibility needs in advance and at the start of events and meetings** where possible, and we **create space in meetings** should an accessibility need come up.
- We **use the pronouns people ask us to use for them**. Not everyone identifies as the gender they may appear as, or the one they were assigned at birth. Some people identify as not having a gender at all.
- We **avoid jargon and complex language where possible**. XR does use acronyms and specialised language but these can be a barrier to accessibility. We take time to write out all abbreviations in full at least once in documents, bracketing the abbreviation. We will explain what abbreviations mean when asked.
- We **make time to mentor and support Rebels**, working to build their skills and confidence within XR. We make training and support available to people with commitments that constrain their availability, using recordings, resources and online courses that can be accessed round the clock.

## How we mitigate power and distribute decision-making

- For groups working UK-wide we need an agreed way of **distributing authority between and within teams, for improving collective decision making** — so that we don't have to renegotiate this every time. The XR UK Constitution sets out the agreed processes, roles and methods of organising in our Self-Organising System (SOS). We sometimes refer to groups as 'teams' or 'Circles' — these all mean the same, though the term 'Circle' has a specific definition in the Constitution.
- We reject **hierarchies of power**, where one role or team has authority over how another works. However, we adopt a **hierarchy of purpose** to help organise our teams. Uppermost is the achievement of XR's shared vision and its demands in the UK, working to create a world that is fit for generations to come.
- We divide the goals set by our vision into sub-goals, each with their own purpose, and their own team responsible for deciding how to achieve it; we keep on creating more sub-divisions. In this way each team and each role adds together to play its part in achieving our demands.
- As well as organising according to purpose, we also organise according to location. Within the UK, the nations and regions choose whether to follow the XR UK Constitution or their own version of decentralising and self-organising. Small and informal groups may not

need to collaborate frequently with others, so may not need processes for decision-making beyond their own limits. As with other groups, however, they may discuss and record group agreements about how everyone wants to treat each other and work together.

- If someone breaks the group agreement, we ensure there is clarity about the breach, and support for changing the relevant behaviour, while also keeping the agreement under review. We revisit the group agreement with the person and the team to ensure it is fit for purpose. If these steps are not effective the person may be asked to leave the team. (These processes should be in your constitution or other agreement, including when and how agreements are reviewed.) Behaviour that doesn't meet needs for safety and security can sap the energy of the group. It might seem like you're doing the kind thing, but other people won't join it or stay in it. If you would like to seek support with a tension or conflict, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Healthy Teams on their Mattermost reception channel or email HealthyTeams@proton.me.
- In the SOS, **roles and teams have autonomy to make decisions within their mandates**. To inform these decisions, teams should get advice from others affected by the decisions and also from people with experience in the area. This means that decisions are made by small groups, not by large group consensus.
- We aim to be clear about **roles, their purposes and accountabilities**, and transparent about decision-making. Those making decisions are accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. We reflect and learn based on these outcomes and how advice was taken into account.
- If you are not taking an active role in the group, yet still taking part in team discussions and decisions you should consider stepping back. Only by committing to work to help the group achieve its purpose do you have the right to have a say in how it is run. Taking part in group decisions without working to put the decisions into action is a form of 'power over' the rest of the group. We aim to mitigate such power. If you have a mandate, including purpose and accountabilities, you are expected to do the things you are accountable for, but you have control over how you prioritise them to achieve your purpose. Mandates define the range, not the amount, of work.

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# 2. Ways to be around each other

## We listen to each other, and speak and act mindfully

- When we listen:
  - We accept that everyone is in the Rebellion because we share a vision of change.
  - We use active listening with the intention to understand what the other person is sharing.
  - We avoid making assumptions, and ask thoughtful questions for clarification.
- We work to **understand the difference between being in dialogue with others and talking at them**.

- If you find it difficult to share speaking space with others, please seek support in how to participate from the Internal Coordinator of your team (who may refer you to other specialist roles or teams in the movement).
- We are aware that **some people find speaking in groups challenging**, so we make space for everyone to participate equitably.
- We use the acronym **WAIT** in meetings to remain mindful of what we say and why we say it:
  - Why
  - Am
  - I
  - Talking?
- **We speak from our own position, beginning statements with "I"** to ensure we take ownership over our opinions and contributions. For example: "I think...", "I feel...", and "In my experience...". Sometimes we may acknowledge contradictory perspectives within ourselves and say, "a part of me feels..." or "something in me resists..."

## We work in groups productively and support each other

- When we work in teams, there are several dimensions to our activity:
  - **Task performance and production** — as set out in the mandate of our role, these tasks help the team achieve its purpose and help the movement achieve its demands;
  - **Support of members individually** — seeking and providing advice, coaching, and apprenticing with more experienced team members;
  - **Building a team identity** — where we develop shared values and understandings and loyalties to each other collectively.
- While these different strands are often woven together in the course of our teamwork, it can be helpful to reflect and remind ourselves about each of them. This includes when to pursue each strand and when to leave it. Here are some examples.
  - In meetings, when discussing a proposal from a team member, it can be helpful to **speak from our role(s)** — which means not sharing every opinion that comes into your head, but asking "how can my role support this proposal?" or "does the proposal have an impact on my role at all?" because, if it doesn't, it may speed performance and production to keep quiet (see WAIT above);
  - Alongside formal meetings, it can be useful to **schedule time devoted to personal relationships**, including giving people the support they need to be effective members of the team, and building our shared values and team identity. This is where we show up as our whole selves, not just our roles.

## We treat people and their personal information with respect

- We make sure we only hold the information we need, and, where we need personal data, we take care of it in line with our Privacy Policy.

- We keep the data secure, and delete it when it is no longer needed. (The GDPR and Security Circle are here to help.)

## More than just resistance, we are building regenerative cultures

- We **take self-care seriously**.
- We **process the emotions we find ourselves experiencing**. Ways of doing this include, but are not limited to:
  - peer-to-peer support
  - listening circles
  - therapy
  - regular breaks and holidays
  - hobbies and sports
  - eating well
  - exercise
  - addressing addictive behaviour
  - mindfulness practices
  - awareness of group dynamics and the tendency for some groups to be silenced
  - spirituality and religion.
- We need to be aware of our risk of burnout.
  - The work we do together is difficult.
  - We limit the times we say “Yes“ to things, so that we stay within our capacity.
  - **Burnout compromises our own needs for safety and security**, and may impact our: physical health, mental health, emotions, focus and productivity, decision-making ability, relationships, morale, creativity, self-care.
  - **Burnout compromises others’ needs for safety and security**, and may impact their: team dynamics, communication, team capacity, compassion and empathy, support networks, shared work loads.
- **Take a break if you are not feeling positive about your time in XR**. Negative feelings will have an impact on your wellbeing and the wellbeing of the people you work with.
- We value honesty, authenticity, and sharing feelings of kindness towards each other.
  - We keep our groups as **welcoming to as many people** as possible
  - We **ask for consent** before entering someone’s physical space.
  - We are mindful that we **come from different social and cultural backgrounds**.
- We consider how you “land” with other people.
  - **One person's idea of friendliness will not always match another’s**.
  - We do not take it personally if our ideas of friendliness are not always shared.
- We welcome people to bring their whole selves to XR.
  - Sometimes Rebels can get quite emotional or animated in meetings, and this can make spaces uncomfortable.
  - If your feelings are becoming too much, we ask you to respectfully step-back from the meeting.

    - We understand that not everyone can engage with information and ideas in the same way.
- We celebrate and appreciate each other,ourselves and our relationship with the planet
    - We **make room for gratitude**, towards others and our place in the ecosystem, and try to express it in the moment.
    - We take time to **celebrate what we are getting done**, not just on the to-do list.
    - We develop a deepening understanding of ourselves as part of an interconnected ecosystem.
- We have a sense of humour.
    - The climate emergency is not going away overnight.
    - We can have **fun in XR, and have laughs and make jokes** even while we do serious work.

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# 3. How to approach working together

## We work together in groups (circles/teams)

- We are all crew.
    - Each of us takes responsibility for how we work together in groups.
    - If we see a task that needs doing, and we can do it, we do. We may do this after first checking that another team has not got a mandate or other authority to decide how the task is done.
    - If we know other people aren't seeing tasks that need doing, we value making the changes so those tasks are seen.
- We treat each other well.
    - We join groups with the **intention to work together**.
    - We take up roles and **engage with existing groups** when we have ideas that are in alignment with a group and when we are prepared to do the work.
    - We **trust and support our groups** and the individuals within them, even if we are not always in agreement.
- To create and inspire more positive and regenerative ways of being together, we **do not blame or shame** each other.
    - We take time to understand each other's ideas and motivations.
    - If we are feeling an unresolved tension in relation to something another group member has done or said we can invite a compassionate dialogue using short feedback loops.
    - We avoid talking about anybody in a negative way when they're not around as this can corrode trust.
    - We start from the assumption that everybody is well meaning, shares the same goals, and is doing their best.
- We try to communicate openly, honestly and compassionately.
    - One model is Nonviolent Communication, started by Marshall Rosenberg. We share what we observe, feel, need and request.

    - NVC is not the only model of communication.
- We reflect and learn without blame
    - We are all human, and do things that we may regret or feel that we could improve. .
    - We aim for a balance between trying and experimenting while being prepared to change course.
    - Our focus is on compassionate and just solutions.
- We are solution focused.
    - When a problem is identified, we form the habit of suggesting and working on solutions.
    - We encourage and inspire others to be solution focused too.

## We are committed and reliable

- We are aware of how much time we and others can realistically volunteer for XR.
    - **Volunteer hours are the most valuable resource we have**.
    - We **take responsibility** for managing the time you have available for XR work
    - We are mindful of using up the time of other volunteers. Thousands of hours are wasted each year by people being inconsiderate of other people's time.
- We are willing to **use XR's tech infrastructure**.
    - Most importantly we use the XR UK Hub
        - to record important details: team members, how to contact them, mandates, policies, sub-circles; and
        - to provide transparency to the rest of the movement.
    - Mattermost is the messaging platform over which we have most control, supplemented by Telegram and Signal for some purposes. WhatsApp enables the collection of data about our teams for use by those who oppose us, and is not safe.
    - Introductory guidance on our online tools — and on our ways of working generally — is available on the Rebel Toolkit.
    - All our ways of working also apply to online spaces including video-conferencing platforms.
- We try to communicate mindfully, compassionately and nonviolently with each other rather than against each other.
- Additionally, we **respect rebels' need for screen-free time**. Online discussions can be a great way to connect over long distances but they can drag on forever and clog up people's inboxes. Discuss issues face-to-face when possible, or at meetings when they affect the whole group, and don't include more people on an email thread than needed.
- We follow through with our projects and action points.
    - **Slow down your "yes"**. Only volunteer for tasks you are willing and able to do.
    - **Return tasks you are unable to complete**, so that someone else can do them. We understand that situations change; returning tasks is done without blame and shame.
    - For significant work, **try to have a back-up person or work with a group**.
    - Lack of follow-through may indicate underlying group issues, such as hurt feelings or unresolved conflict. Working through these issues can help find a solution.

# We run efficient, inclusive and regenerative meetings

- **Meetings in XR UK should follow a similar structure**, so that no matter what meeting you attend you will be able to understand what is happening.
  - List of attendees and their roles. We use nicknames if this helps protect people. This is important for accountability of any decisions made.
  - **Assign a facilitator and minute-taker**. As both roles hold a lot of power and responsibility, it is recommended that they attend training where practical and possible. Some groups elect people into these roles.
  - **Check-ins** are an opportunity for people to arrive in the meeting, and to see how people are before starting work. We recognise that not everybody is comfortable checking in, so check-ins are always optional.
  - **Regenerative cultures reminder** provides an opportunity to pause, to connect in with ourselves and the others in our meeting, and our deeper mission for cultural transformation and the wellbeing of all.
  - Read over any group agreement that provides additional guidelines teams work within (this may complement or embody the Constitution and Ways of Working).
  - **Review the action points** (tasks) from the last meeting — the opportunity to see how tasks are going, and if they need to be returned to the group.
  - Hear updates from sub-circles and project groups — the opportunity for the group to hear how sub-circles and projects are doing.
  - **Deliver the agenda** — where the main part of the meeting takes place.
  - **Collate action points** to ensure we all know what we will be working on.
  - Decide the date of the next meeting to ensure we all know when we are meeting again.
- Here is the agenda template and agenda guide.
- We know how to be in meetings, to keep them efficient, inclusive and regenerative.
  - **We agree our agendas in advance** as much as possible.
  - **We arrive on time**, and we try hard to finish on time, because we value the time each person volunteers to XR.
  - **We are concise** when we talk, so that everybody has time to speak.
  - **We remember WAIT: “Why am I talking?”** Ask yourself if something needs to be discussed in the meeting before you bring it in.
  - **We take breaks in meetings**. Everybody has different energy levels and accessibility needs.
  - We talk when the facilitator invites us to speak.
  - We talk one at a time.
  - We use hand signals in meetings to indicate that we wish to speak.
- We take responsibility for our feelings and behaviours in meetings.
  - Everyone is allowed to mindfully express our personal difficulties and our grief about the climate emergency if it helps you participate in meetings.
  - Anger can be a challenging emotion to express safely in a meeting, and expressing unfocused anger can be unfair to your team members.
  - If we experience anger around a group decision, and then block the work of the group because we cannot move past it, we should step back from that group.

- If we are consistently struggling to manage our emotions, we can and should take a step back from our work until we can put support in place for ourselves.
- The Trained Emotional Support Network (TESN) is available to offer support to any Rebel in need.

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