Why do we need new rebels?

For a movement that aims to mobilise 3.5% of the population, that seems like a daft question! However, it can be useful to think about why we need new people beyond just the obvious.

New rebels are the lifeblood of every team

We know we need numbers to win. We may think about it less, but we also need the energy, skills, ideas, community connections, diversity and fresh perspective new rebels bring us. Last but not least, we need our stretched coordinators to be able to take a break sometimes!

Sometimes it can seem like bringing new rebels into our groups just creates work. Maybe the team is very busy and has experienced inducting a rebel who quickly left again. At times like these, it is tempting to think "oh, we'll just do it all ourselves".

However, if we close ourselves in this way, it can easily lead to a downward spiral. Without a continual flow of new people, the team ends 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 really go wrong. 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 (typically for around a month). It is best that coordinating this work falls to someone who is not frazzled from doing a ton of other things and typically this will be the team's integrator.

This does *not* mean it is the integrator's job alone to make new people feel welcome! This is a job for *everyone* in the team.

Of course, no one can guarantee that your rebels will stick with you, but there are some things you can do to make it more likely. We had a People's Assembly and asked why people 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' 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 Rebel 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; and
- 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 rebels who arrive in your group.