

Carol Warwick is the Volunteers Coordinator for Barrow Foodbank. Barrow Foodbank is based at the Abbey Road Baptist Church, Barrow-in-Furness, but also has satellite sites in Millom and Ulverston. The Foodbank Project Manager and Assistant Manager are responsible for the operation of the Foodbank and we work in accordance with the operating instructions and policies of the Barrow Foodbank, the Trustees Board and the Trussell Trust.



Carol decided to become a volunteer at Barrow Foodbank in 2012 when she became aware that her local community was in need of helpers to ensure that families in crisis could be supplied with basic foodstuffs until they were able to get the ongoing long term support they needed.

### What experience did you need to obtain your role?

The Foodbank is a structured and well organised Voluntary group and volunteers can usually be accommodated in any area they have the skills for or request. I started in the packing area and enjoyed working as part of the team, every Thursday, and I still enjoy working in the warehouse if I am up to date with my coordinating role.

My role is mainly one of communication and accessibility, and in my job, pre-retirement, I was a Primary School teacher, so I think that I have gained experience in doing plenty of talking and explaining! I also speak to groups who have kindly chosen to donate food to the Foodbank, from Nursery children to adults, and I attend Volunteering Fairs. I am responsible for reporting to our Core Groups on a regular basis and to the Trustees as required.

### What does your role involve?

I was asked to take on the role of Volunteers Coordinator in 2019 and I, hopefully, provide a welcome to those people enquiring about joining our group. As with many organisations the 'Lockdowns' brought many changes to the way in which services operated. Many volunteers could no longer work safely in the confines of the warehouse and older volunteers began to 'shield' at home. Our management team continued to ensure that food was distributed, and I began to work from home replying to enquiries and sending out forms digitally. This change has actually made me more efficient, and I can respond to volunteers' requests at any time and not just on a specific day when I am in the Foodbank Office.

Enquiries from volunteers are varied and come from people who are retiring, those who are between jobs or wanting job experience, students or maybe those who are recovering from ill health. I reply to everyone who enquires and describe the vacancies available, some positions require lifting or a clean driving licence, but the main problem for many hoping to volunteer is that we have limited working hours and do not open in the evenings or at weekends. After this initial contact, I will send out the Application Form and Reference Form. We require two Referees for each applicant.

When the paperwork has been successfully completed, I collate it and discuss our needs with the management team who control the rotas and advise as to which days and in which departments we have vacancies. I can then organise a brief visit and induction for the volunteer. This is one of the best parts of my job as the person I have been communicating with becomes real and new team members can be welcomed by the rest of our volunteers who are a very friendly crowd. I have yet to show anyone through the warehouse, and Drop-in Centre, who hasn't been amazed at the amount of food that our community donate and the way in which it is organised so that nothing is wasted.

I am responsible for the data that is kept for each volunteer, as we do ask volunteers to sign confidentiality forms and a health and safety document after their tour of the premises. The data provided is kept according to the present data regulations and the Trussell Trust provide guidance for me to follow in this, and other areas concerning volunteers.



### What have been the best bits and challenges of your role?

Volunteering for me is a win-win situation. It is rewarding to know that my small contribution is helping our Foodbank users, plus I get enjoyment from the friendships that I have made through my involvement with Foodbank.

The challenge that our local area faces is a daily one of providing food to those in need and I am proud to be a volunteer working with like-minded individuals, within a well-managed and adaptable organisation that values its volunteers.



### Top tips for people wanting to become a Volunteers Coordinator:

A warm welcome awaits those interested in volunteering and hopefully I will remain the person to be delivering it in the future.

The world of volunteering is wide, and people are attracted for various reasons. The best thing that could happen to my role is that it would no longer exist, and Foodbanks would not be a necessary part of our community.

I joined mainly because I was thinking of children who arrive at school without breakfast and find it very hard to maintain concentration through the morning and are very hungry at lunchtime. I wanted to be part of the support network which has grown in this community to ensure that families, and those single people, who are striving to have a decent life, even when they are often in employment, have a chance to do so. The Barrow Foodbank joins with other local organisations to offer this support and so we are part of an effective wider local group always trying to improve the services we offer.

### How can I find out more?

You can find out more about Barrow Foodbank [here](#).

If you are interested in volunteering you can find out more at the Barrow Foodbank website [here](#).

If you need to access Barrow Foodbank please call [01229 343436](tel:01229343436) or email [projectmanager@barrowfoodbank.co.uk](mailto:projectmanager@barrowfoodbank.co.uk). More information is available at the Barrow Foodbank website [here](#).