



The Wiseman Connection

Part of The Romero Catholic Academy



The Romero Catholic Academy

Nurturing the Talent of Tomorrow



Graham Parsons

Chief Pharmacist at Turning Point

Turning Point offers a range of health and wellbeing services across **300 locations** supporting people with substance use, mental health and learning disability presentations.

School life

Graham grew up in the Wyken area of Coventry and attended St John Fisher Catholic Primary School before joining Cardinal Wiseman in 1980. He was in Augustine House where he spent five years before going on to the school's sixth form.

He said: "I really enjoyed my time at Cardinal Wiseman. I was a keen scholar but also a sportsperson so, certainly during the 1980s, Wiseman was a great school for me.

"We never lost a basketball match in Coventry under the tutelage of Mr Pearce.

We also won the Coventry Schools Cup for football in around 1984. I was the goalkeeper and we beat Woodlands 2-0.

"Football is a great love of mine and it was my first ever football trophy, so it was a really special day for me – I still have the clippings from the newspaper."

Despite developing a love of books at school, it was chemistry that was Graham's favourite subject and it was this that shaped his career path.

He said: "I always wanted to do something in the medical field, but many of my family

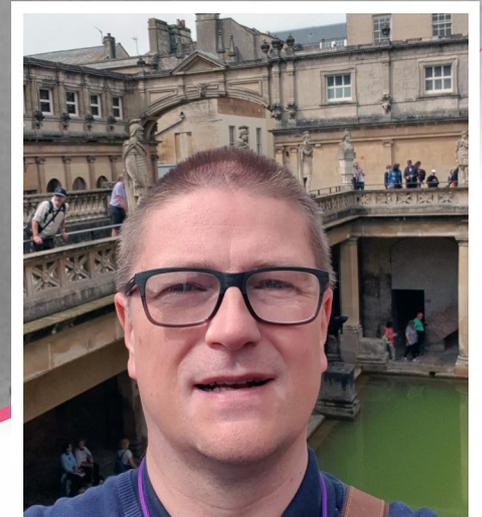
worked at Rolls Royce and one of my brothers was a policeman, so I expected to follow them in some form.

"However, my Dad died of cancer in 1985 and he always wanted me to go to university so I was driven to pursue this.

"I decided to study pharmacy because of my interest in chemistry and pharmacology - how medicines work in the body. Sometimes significant life events are traumatic at the time, but can lead to changes which have an impact on you for many years."



Graham at Cardinal Wiseman's sixth form



Career

Graham went to the University of Bath in 1987 to study pharmacy and graduated with a first class honours degree.

He began his career in retail pharmacy for Boots where he stayed for nine years, four of which were spent managing a pharmacy in Plymouth.

Graham added: "I then became a self-employed locum pharmacist working in the Plymouth area, and it was during this time that I became interested in helping people with drug and alcohol disorders.

"I took further qualifications through the Royal College of General Practitioners and the University of Cardiff to develop my skills and then went on to work for the local health authority as a specialist medicines management pharmacist adviser in substance misuse."

Graham then undertook a university course to become a specialist pharmacy prescriber and went on to work as a prescriber for the Plymouth Specialist Addiction Service in addition to his specialist adviser role.

In 2010 he was appointed to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, a body that provides advice to the government on drug policy, where he served for three years.

Graham said: "Following changes to how health services operate, I moved out of the substance misuse field in 2013.

"For two years I worked in GP practices as a prescriber and for the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) helping to develop the role of community pharmacists in Devon.

"It was then in 2015 that I had the opportunity to move back into the substance misuse field and joined Turning Point."

As well as continuously striving to broaden his knowledge and skills base in a professional capacity, Graham also looked to do this in his personal life, and in 2016 he graduated from the Open University with a first class honours degree in history.

Graham said: "I love history and was presented with my degree by John Cleese at my graduation ceremony in London. This was one of the best moments of my life as he is one of my favourite comedians."

Graham is now Chief Pharmacist for Turning Point and supports the management of how medicines are used within the organisation. He also advises Public Health England through a number of groups.

He said: "My main role is to ensure that medicines are used in a safe and effective way within our organisation. This includes both the clinical and cost aspects of medicines use. I am also a prescriber and occasionally still work in a clinic.

"As an aside from this, I provide training for the Royal College of General Practitioners in substance misuse management and run a number of training sessions through my private consultancy work."

Advice to current pupils

Speaking about the advice he would give to pupils currently studying at Cardinal Wiseman, Graham said: "Work hard, but also broaden your interests to become a well-rounded person.

"If university is something you want to pursue, think about what you want to study - it may be a subject you are passionate about, such as history, or a vocation like medicine.

"But it's also important to know that university doesn't appeal to everyone and isn't always needed for career progression. Many achieve their goals without it.

"Also, don't worry if you don't know what career you want to pursue in Year 11 or 12, it will come to you.

"One of the biggest pieces of advice I could give is to enjoy life and remember that events will have an impact on you, but don't let them define you."

