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News Release

Hospital Mortuary Team Wins Top National Award

On Friday 25th April at 2pm, Iain Johnstone, Mortuary Manager at the James Paget University Hospitals will receive the Martyn Jon Walton Award for services to tissue banking. This award recognizes the significant contributions of Iain and his team in setting up and running the eye and tissue retrieval service at JPUH from 1993. The whole team has been recognized as being fully committed to this very important service, ensuring it is always delivered to the very highest standard.

The award is given by the British Association of Tissue Banking (BATB) for initiatives that have improved services offered to donor families and advanced understanding of the importance of tissue donation.

Iain Johnstone, Mortuary Manager said: 'I am delighted and honoured to receive this award on behalf of the team here at the James Paget. The eye and tissue retrieval is a very sensitive service run by our expert team. Any potential donors are identified by the bereavement or the mortuary team and the families approached, always within 24 hours after someone has died. The national organ donor register is checked first. Donation is always an option for families, and many are very happy to consider it because they see a chance to help someone, or indeed many people, after their loved one has died. Often they feel it is just what their loved one will have wanted.'

Adrian Pennington, Chief Executive said: 'Iain and his team in the mortuary service, alongside the coroner's staff, and our bereavement and eye bank team are nationally recognized for the high standard of service they provide in tissue and eye retrieval. It is entirely right that they should receive this award, and we are all really proud of the service they provide to donor families and patients who benefit from their excellent work.'

Iain and the mortuary team will be present at the presentation of the award, plus coroners' officers from Yarmouth and Lowestoft and the Yarmouth Coroner, members of the Bereavement Office, retired Consultant Ophthalmologist Mr Peter Black, plus our Eye Bank Team.

Notes for Editors:

The presentation will be at 2pm in the Boardroom at the hospital. Iain Johnstone is available for interview.

ABOUT THE SERVICE: 'Tissue' can mean bone, skin, heart valves, tendons, meniscus (part of a joint). The service always includes eye retrieval. In excess of 347 retrievals have been completed since the service was set up in 1993. Many of these have been for 'Whole Tissue'; this means consent has been given for any tissue to be removed that is suitable for transplant – up to 40 different people can be helped from just one donor who has consented for whole tissue transplant.

Bone is used in orthopaedic surgery right across the country every day. The bone is cleaned and freeze dried and used in restoration surgery (for bone lost through cancer, in an accident or in hip or knee revisions).

Skin is used for burn victims or skin grafts.

Tendons are generally used to replace those damaged or worn often in young people with sports injuries where tendons have snapped.

Eyes – the corneas are retrieved and help two people see again, often young people who have with Keratoconus (a thinning of the cornea). They are also used in a range of corneal conditions which prevent the recipient from seeing clearly or not at all.

ABOUT THE AWARD: Jon Walton, after whom the award is named, was a young man who died in a road accident. The family were approached for donation after his death, and he became a whole tissue donor. His family wanted to establish a memorial for him, and so raised funds each year to set up this award for people across the country who have contributed to supporting families through tissue donation.

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