**IBTS to introduce Individual Donor Risk Assessment on 28th November**

On Monday 28th November, the IBTS will introduce a system of assessing each donor’s eligibility to donate on a person-by-person basis in relation to sexual history and risk, rather than applying risks associated with specific populations which have previously excluded some potential donors.  This system is called Individual Donor Risk Assessment and is similar to the system that was introduced in the UK Blood Services in 2021.

“This is a fairer way to assess donor risk. Using a donor’s individual behaviours to determine if that person is eligible to donate makes the process fairer for all donors and more inclusive, while maintaining the safety of the blood supply. Every donor will be asked the same questions about their sexual activity, regardless of the donor’s gender or sexual orientation, or those of his/her partner,” said Dr Tor Hervig, IBTS Medical & Scientific Director.

“These changes to the way the IBTS assesses the risk of transfusion-transmitted infections incorporate the key recommendations made by the Social Behaviours Review Group (SBRG) in 2021. This independent Advisory Committee was established to review the evidence base for donor eligibility in Ireland relating to behaviours, including sexual behaviours that may increase the risk of acquiring specific blood-borne infections (HIV, HBV, HCV and other sexually transmitted infections).

“The SBRG identified several factors associated with a higher risk of acquiring blood-borne infection. These factors include: engaging in chemsex, having anal sex with a new partner or more than one partner and having a recent sexually transmitted infection. They recommended that questions about these factors should be added to the donor health and lifestyle questionnaires that would be answered by all donors.

“The IBTS will monitor changes in the rates of viral infections and syphilis in blood donors and any reported transfusion-transmitted infections in patients who have received blood. A compliance study will also be undertaken to determine if donors are complying with the new donor eligibility criteria.

“These changes will come into effect at all clinics from Monday 28th November. Giveblood.ie will be updated on that date to reflect the changes,” said Dr Hervig.

**For information on becoming a blood donor please check** [**www.giveblood.ie**](http://www.giveblood.ie)

**ENDS**

**Note to Editor**

The new questions on the health and lifestyle questionnaire which will be asked of all donors are outlined below:

 **In the past 4 months have you had:**

* A new sexual partner\* OR more than one sexual partner?

If YES: Did you have anal sex?

*\**A ‘new sexual partner’ is someone you did not have sex with before, or a person with whom you resumed a sexual relationship in the past 4 months.

*All the above apply even if a condom or other form of protection was used.*

 **In the past 4 months have you:**

* Snorted cocaine or any other drug?
* Taken medication to prevent HIV infection (pre/post exposure prophylaxis PrEP/PEP)?
* Taken part in Chemsex i.e. have you used drugs (other than cannabis, alcohol or Viagra) before or during sex to enhance sexual experience?

If YES: Did you inject or were you injected with drugs?