**Strictly embargoed: 7am Monday 28th March**

**Donor eligibility criteria changes come into effect on 28th March**

The IBTS is today (Monday) pleased to confirm that we are introducing further changes to a range of eligibility criteria, including those related to gbMSM (gay and bisexual men who have sex with men) following a report to its Board in September 2021 by an independent advisory group established to review these criteria. The group, called the Social Behaviours Review Group (SBRG) was chaired by Professor Mary Horgan and made a number of recommendations. The aim of these changes is to make blood donation more inclusive and to welcome additional donors from the LGBT+ community.

The project will be divided into 2 phases. Phase 1 commencing today involves shortening the current deferral of gbMSM from 12 months to 4 months. The deferral of any person who takes pre or post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP or PEP) – taken to reduce the risk of contracting HIV – is also reduced from 12 months to 4 months,” said Dr Tor Hervig, IBTS Medical & Scientific Director.

“This means that a man whose last sexual contact with another man was more than 4 months ago will be eligible to donate if he meets the other donor selection criteria.

“The IBTS will closely monitor the effects of these changes to ensure that blood safety is maintained. This is an interim measure and will be followed later in the year in Phase 2 by an individualised risk assessment of donors’ sexual behaviours, similar to the FAIR (For the Assessment of Individualised Risk) system introduced by the UK Blood Services in June 2021. This individualised risk assessment will include several aspects of sexual behaviour, including oral sex and will apply to all blood donors. The IBTS will be one of the first blood services in the world to introduce such an individualised assessment of donors’ risks and is working towards introducing this system later in 2022,” said Dr Hervig.

**ENDS**

Further details on the changes to donor eligibility criteria are available on www.giveblood.ie