**IBTS calls for donors to make appointments to give blood as the national blood supply is at 3 days**

The IBTS is today (Tuesday) calling on donors to make appointments to give blood over the coming weeks. “Blood stocks this morning stand at 3 days across the main blood groups. Bank holiday weekends are always difficult as our capacity to collect blood is reduced, the increased incidence of COVID-19 in the community as well as seasonal illness is having an adverse effect on donor attendance. Therefore we are asking donors to help us support the health service by making an appointment to give blood when they receive a text from us. The increased demand experienced during the summer and sustained into Autumn has had an impact on stock levels of all blood groups. COVID-19 continues to impact donor blood collections and our ability to maintain the blood supply has become increasingly difficult,” said A/Operations Director Barry Doyle.

“Last week, in advance of the Bank Holiday weekend, the IBTS issued a ‘pre-amber alert letter’ under the National Transfusion Advisory Group blood shortage plan to all hospitals advising them of the current situation and asking them to use blood conservatively. If the IBTS has to issue an ‘amber alert letter’ which is the next escalation level of the blood shortage plan, it would have an immediate implication for hospitals and for elective surgical procedures, requiring blood support. To mitigate against this we are asking people to help us support the health service in its efforts to keep normal hospital services running.

“Blood shortages are not unique to Ireland and many blood services in other countries are also experiencing shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IBTS has been running appointment only clinics since the start of the pandemic and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. This control has allowed us to manage the flow of donors through our clinics and ensure compliance with social distancing guidelines. This also means that it is not possible for the IBTS to make a traditional appeal for donors as they could not be safely accommodated on a ‘walk in’ basis.

“Donor appointments are done entirely on the phone with donors being pre-screened before an appointment is made for them to attend the donation clinic, to avoid unnecessary attendance. We are asking existing donors to ring us when they get a text from us about their local clinic and make an appointment to attend. New donors who are interested in becoming donors can register their interest on [www.giveblood.ie](http://www.giveblood.ie) and we will make contact when a donation clinic is scheduled at a location near to them.

“We would also ask our donors to bear with us if we cannot get to answer every call when it is made and promise to get to back them as quickly as we can.”

**ENDS**