**Donations increased by almost 2000 in 2017**

**IBTS publishes 2017 Annual Report**

The IBTS today (Wednesday 1st August) published its 2017 Annual report. “The IBTS continues to supply blood, platelets, tissue and blood products to patients in Ireland within very high standards of quality. What is emerging is that like many developed countries we have difficulty in maintaining a consistent supply to hospitals. Consequently, our marketing and advertising must become more targeted and across many platforms,” said IBTS Chief Executive Andy Kelly.

“We have very high deferral rates especially in haemoglobin and this has resulted in shortages in certain blood groups during the course of the year. We have particular difficulty in maintaining supply of O negative blood. There are some hospitals that are using this group inappropriately and we will have to manage this group more actively during 2018 and take whatever steps are necessary to protect our O negative donors.

“There were 130,566 donations collected in 2017, which represented an increase of 1,871 over the previous year. The number of donors who gave these donations has dropped slightly to 79,381 from 81,439 in 2016.

“We launched a new creative campaign during 2017 called *Every One Counts* based on the principle of a few telling the many. This was designed for social media and we had a very good response to this campaign. It also dovetailed with the implementation of a new website. We also ran the international campaign *Missing Type* and this with the new creative campaign resulted in IBTS having a much more visible presence on digital platforms. While social media has seen very positive results we must also become more visible in other spaces to attract other donors who are not active on social media.

“For the first time in a number of years we saw an increase in the use of blood and platelets which was unexpected. This was mainly due to increased transfusion to sickle cell patients and increased activity in oncology and haematology cases.

“The IBTS implemented changes to the MSM criteria for donating in January 2017. This was a major change to our donation criteria and brought the IBTS in line with most international blood services. We will monitor the change to see what the impact on the deferrals might be and on the blood supply”, he said.

“This change in deferral criteria for MSM is in keeping with the practice in many other countries and given the state of the art testing facilities is considered to be a safe practice. This will be reviewed in 2018,” said Dr Stephen Field, Medical and Scientific Director.

**ENDS**

**Note to editors**

* The donation frequency among the donor population for 2017 was 1.29 donations per donor that attended – this was an increase on the previous year of 9.3%
* Donors can give blood every 90 days
* A blood donation can only be stored for just 35 days