

More people in Wales to be eligible to donate blood

Current blood donation rules prevent people who engage in some sexual behaviours from giving blood for a 12 month period.

As a result of scientific advances and improved understanding of the tests used, the Welsh Blood Service will be reducing deferral donation periods for specific blood donors in Wales.

The changes to the blood donation rules, which will be introduced by the Welsh Blood Service in early 2018, will see:

- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for men who have sex with men (MSM) (from the current 12 months)
- a deferral period of 3 months for commercial sex workers (from permanent deferral)
- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for those who have sex with a high risk partner (from the current 12 months)
- a reduced deferral period of 3 months for those who have sex with a partner who has been sexually active in areas where HIV is common (from the current 12 months).

The change was recommended following a review by the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SABTO).

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

“I want to ensure that as many people as possible are able to donate blood to meet the demand from patients in Wales.

“In Wales and the UK, we’re fortunate to have one of the safest blood supplies in the world. Thanks to advances in medical science, we now have a far better understanding of the way infections are transmitted through blood.

“The changes I’m announcing today will help ensure we keep blood donors and the patients who receive their blood safe, while also ensuring more people have the opportunity to donate blood.”

The Minister has asked the Welsh Blood Service to look at how the changes can be introduced including the use of more personalised risk assessments for individual donors.