

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
BY DEPUTY S.Y. MÉZEC OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2017**

**Question**

What are the current rules relating to the donation of blood by gay men and what restrictions, if any, are in place? If there are different rules in this area for gay men and heterosexual men, what is the reason for there being different rules; and has the Minister given any consideration to reviewing the rules?

**Answer**

I can confirm that the Jersey Blood Donor service follows the UK guidance relating to blood donation. This guidance in full can be found using this link <http://www.transfusionguidelines.org.uk/dsg/wb>

This guidance covers many aspects of blood donation and seeks to minimise risks to both the donor and the recipient of collecting and processing blood components to ensure that only the highest quality blood components are produced. Of necessity this is selective and the principles of public safety are paramount. There are frequent updates relating to this guidance with 18 being issued in 2016 covering a wide spectrum of issues. The last relevant update relating to homosexual and bisexual individuals was in 2011 and the text is attached at Appendix 1.

All donors, irrespective of age, gender, race or sexual orientation are asked to complete a questionnaire on each occasion before donating. This gives the health professionals prompts to question any aspects that may lead to a risk that would necessitate not taking the donation on that visit – for example, if the donor had visited a country with a known malarial or a viral risk, such as Zika Virus. This includes mandatory deferral of male and female heterosexual partners of individuals with a current Zika Virus incubation risk.

If a male donor answers the questionnaire stating that they have had oral or anal sexual contact with or without protection with another man in the last 12 months, the donation will be declined. This is different for female bisexual or homosexual donors. The reason for this can be found within the guidance and the change notification No 17-2011 states:

“Men who have sex with other men have a higher chance of having an undiagnosed infection which could be passed to anyone receiving their blood. During 2010 and 2011, SaBTO (Safety of Blood Tissues and Organs) commissioned a subgroup to review the donor selection criteria and risks associated with blood donation by men who have had sex with men.

This review considered advances in the sensitivity of testing procedures currently in use in the UK, the prevalence of transfusion transmissible infections in men who are having sex with men, and the current level of compliance with the previous permanent exclusion. This review recommended that the deferral period for men who have had sex with men should be reduced to 12 months after last sexual contact. The recommendations were approved by SaBTO and by the English Department of Health and the devolved authorities in Scotland and Wales.”

Jersey adopted these changes when they were released.

In terms of bisexual and homosexual women the guidance states:

“There is no evidence that there is an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections in homosexual or bisexual females compared to heterosexual females.”

Therefore I can confirm that there are differing selection criteria for homosexual and bisexual men compared to women, but this is in accordance with UK accepted best practice. I can also confirm that I will not be considering any changes to these criteria for the Jersey Blood Donor service and we will continue to work in line with the UK guidance – making changes only when they make recommendations to do so. This is to ensure that we offer the safest and best quality service to Islanders.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Islanders who volunteer as blood donors as they provide critical support to our clinical services. My Department has a duty to maintain a public blood supply and in doing so is reasonably expected to select those donors known to present the least potential risk to patients.

## **Appendix 1**

**Date of publication: 20 September 2011 Implementation: 7 November 2011**

## **Change Notification UK National Blood Services No. 17 - 2011**

# **Homosexual and Bisexual Individuals**

**Applies to the Whole Blood and Components Donor Selection Guidelines only.**

### **1. Female**

**Discretionary** Accept.

#### **Additional Information**

There is no evidence that there is an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections in homosexual or bisexual females compared to heterosexual females.

### **2. Male**

#### **Obligatory Must not donate if:**

Has had oral or anal sex with another man, even if a condom or other protective was used.

**Discretionary** If 12 months or more from the last oral or anal sexual contact with another man, accept

**See if Relevant** Blood Safety Entry

#### **Additional Information**

Men who have sex with other men have a higher chance of having an undiagnosed infection which could be passed to anyone receiving their blood. During 2010 and 2011, SaBTO commissioned a subgroup to review the donor selection criteria and risks associated with blood donation by men who have had sex with men.

This review considered advances in the sensitivity of testing procedures currently in use in the UK, the prevalence of transfusion transmissible infections in men who have had sex with men, and the current level of compliance with the permanent exclusion. This review recommended that the deferral period for men who have had sex with men should be reduced to 12 months after last sexual contact. The recommendations were approved by SaBTO and by the English Department of Health and the devolved authorities in Scotland, and Wales.

### **3. Female Sexual Partners of Men who have Sex with Men**

**Obligatory Must not donate if:**

Male partner has had oral or anal sex with another man, even if a condom or other protective was used.

**Discretionary** If 12 months or more from the last sexual contact with a man who has ever had sex with another man, accept. There are exceptions so please ask.

**See if Relevant** Blood Safety Entry

**Additional Information**

Men who have sex with other men have a higher chance of having an undiagnosed infection which could be passed to their female partner.

Waiting twelve months from the last sexual contact helps to ensure that the infections tested for by the Blood Services will be picked up.

There may be exceptions for female partners of men who have had sex with men. They may be allowed to donate on the basis of an individual risk assessment.

**Reason for Change** The guidance has been changed in line with recommendations from the Department of Health Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO).