University of Bradford students have converged on the city's blood donor centre to call for 'donation not discrimination'.

The students, members of the University's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Society, say the current National Blood Service policy, which bans gay and bisexual men from giving blood for life, is archaic and should be reviewed.

Yesterday's protest was part of a campaign by the National Union of Students (NUS), which believes the policy of asking men if they have ever had unprotected sex with another man is homophobic.

The campaign, outside the blood donor centre in Rawson Road, saw students encouraging friends, fellow students and passers-by to donate blood in place of the district's gay and bisexual men.

Student Josh Bradley, 19, was one of those protesting. He said: "We had a really successful day and handed out about 150 leaflets."

"We got eight people to give blood for us, seven of whom were first time donors. We have also managed to collect 72 signatures on our petition campaigning for an end to the ban."

Josh said the policy was homophobic because it did not take into account whether sex was protected or how long ago sexual activity took place.

"This gives a somewhat contradictory message about the use of condoms in sexual acts," he said.

"If sex is safe and consensual, the argument is it should be considered low risk, no matter the genders of the people involved.

"A man who experimented safely with same-sex relationships 20 years ago would be banned from giving blood, whilst a promiscuous heterosexual man would be free to give blood."

A spokesman for the National Blood Service said it had a duty to ensure a supply of safe blood.

"This includes a clear responsibility to minimise the risk of a blood transfusion transmitting an infection to patients," she said.

"In order to assure the continued safety of the blood supply, we currently ask those in groups shown to have a high risk of carrying blood-borne viruses not to give blood.

"Men who have sex with men continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV and account for 63 per cent of diagnosed cases where the infection was likely to have been acquired in the UK.

"The reason for this exclusion rests on specific sexual behaviour rather than sexuality. There is no exclusion of gay men who have never had sex with a man nor of women who have sex with women."

To find out more about who can give blood visit blood.co.uk.