



Navigating the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as an LGBTQI+ Person

Reporting Procedures and Routes to Redress

Wholeness & Justice is a programme managed by CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice that aims to expand access by diverse LGBTQI+ people in Trinidad & Tobago to wholeness, justice, and human services with a view of encouraging justice-seeking, self-advocacy, improving access to redress, and enabling healing and resilience.

LGBTQI+ EXPERIENCES

These experiences are based on the work of Wholeness & Justice and stories shared by members of the community.



The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) has a mandate to and protect life and property, among others, and commits to doing this with [P.R.I.D.E.](#) (Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Dignity, and Excellence). The TTPS recognises that it will “protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the rights of **all persons**” [emphasis added].

However, many LGBTQI+ people have noted experiences with the TTPS which are contrary to the TTPS’ own aim to serve with PRIDE. Reports received by CAISO’s Wholeness & Justice programme, as well as many anecdotal accounts of LGBTQI+ people’s interaction with the TTPS, have shown that these problems persist. Examples of these attitudes and responses include instances where officers of the TTPS:

- use their power to harass, ridicule and intimidate people in vulnerable situations based on their (the officers’) perception of their sexuality.
- ignore or deny service to LGBTQI+ people.
- fixate on a LGBTQI+ person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or expression when that LGBTQI+ person approached them for service (regardless of whether it is linked to their status as a LGBTQI+ person).
- express unwillingness to intervene in violent situations involving same-sex/queer partners.
- make derogatory remarks and slurs to LGBTQI+ people attempting to seek justice.
- refuse to investigate matters/complaints made by LGBTQI+ people and/or frustrate the process by not giving them a receipt once a report has been made.
- target LGBTQI+ people (particularly trans and gender non-conforming people) in the exercise of their duties.

These negative experiences of the TTPS are situated in a context of the institution’s general shortcomings with managing gender-based crimes and issues. In their 2018 study on women’s experiences in reporting domestic violence to the TTPS, [Johnson and Boodram](#) note four areas in which their research participants noted unjust behaviours from TTPS officers: unprofessional conduct, disrespectful treatment, fear of negative repercussions, and police inaction.

RIGHTS-BASED VIOLATIONS



Based on the [work of the Wholeness & Justice programme](#), rights-based violations are usually experienced by LGBTQI+ people who are of a lower socio-economic position, have little to no access to social resources, and often do not have networks or connections to aid in justice-seeking. The TTPS thus becomes one of the few and first points of contact for members of the community whose rights have been infringed or who require protection. However, a majority of people who have noted experiencing violations indicated an unwillingness to pursue seeking protection from the TTPS, and subsequent legal redress, as they anticipate unhelpfulness and further victimisation, as well as a fear of being retaliated against by their perpetrators with no assurance of protection from the police.

Because legal redress for many violations requires first engaging the TTPS by making a police report, the service's general treatment of the community makes justice-seeking a challenge. However, it is still very important to know how to make a police report, how to engage the Police Complaints Authority, and that there is legal assistance available to members of the LGBTQI+ community in Trinidad and Tobago by the Wholeness & Justice programme.

MAKING A POLICE REPORT

For more information or assistance, contact the Wholeness & Justice programme using the information provided.

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There are many ways to make a Police Report:

- By calling 999.
- By visiting any police station.
- By visiting the TTPS website at www.ttps.gov.tt and click on “Report A Crime”. Follow the instructions and submit the report. You will need to provide the following information: Your email address, phone number and other contact information, The incident start and end date, and the location of the incident.
- By downloading the TTPS mobile app and clicking on “Report a Crime”. The App has a translation option as well as all the numbers for all Police Stations throughout the country.

If you do have to visit a police station or interact with a police officer, we have provided a few suggestions below:

- Ask a close friend or family member with whom you are close to accompany you.
- It is always best to try to remain as calm as possible so that you can provide the required information clearly.
- Listen carefully to what is being asked and respond to the best of your knowledge. This will ensure that the police officer has all the required information to take your report.
- If you do not understand what is being said to or asked of you, let the officer know.
- Take down the regimental number and name of the police officer you spoke with.
- Ensure you obtain a citizen report receipt after making a report. If no receipt is available please return within two (2) days for a receipt.

The final two tips provided above are very important. If you experience victimisation, lack of assistance, or any other issues when trying to engage the assistance of the TTPS, the regimental number and name of the police officer you spoke with and the citizen report receipt will aid in justice-seeking. If a police officer refuses to provide either their regimental number and name, or a receipt, you can contact the Wholeness & Justice programme at 282-2476 on Monday – Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. for assistance.



The **Police Complaints Authority (PCA)** is an independent body set up by Parliament to keep watch over the TTPS. The PCA accepts complaints against the TTPS. According to the PCA, a complaint is an allegation of police corruption, serious police misconduct, the commission of a criminal offence by a police officer, or the commission of a criminal offence by another person but involving a police officer. There are guidelines as to what complaints the PCA accepts. This is contained on the PCA's website at <https://www.pca.org.tt/faq>. However, it is important to note that the PCA does not accept a complaint where:

- The complaint is about something that happened more than 12 months ago.
- The matter is one which involves police misconduct of a trivial nature.
- The complaint is considered to be frivolous or vexatious or not made in good faith.
- You are not the person directly affected and the person who is doesn't want us to take further action.
- You make your complaint anonymously and we can't contact you to get the information we need to assess the complaint.
- There is or has been a more appropriate way to resolve your complaint e.g. Court proceedings.

It is thus not certain what the PCA may consider 'trivial'. Based on the work of the Wholeness & Justice programme, there is a measure of arbitrariness that goes into such a determination. This may thus leave members of the LGBTQI+ community seeking the assistance of the PCA with questions as to the perceived seriousness of their claim. In such instances, the Police Complaints Division of the TTPS can also be engaged.

The **Police Complaints Division (PCD)** investigates all matters with respect to allegations made by members of the public of ill-treatment by the police officers toward them.

You can lodge a complaint in two ways.

If you are mistreated at any police station, you can immediately lodge a complaint at the said police station requesting a complaint form from the duty corporal or duty Sargent. This form is completed in duplicate and then placed in a sealed envelope. Make sure to request a copy of your complaint for your records.

You can also lodge a complaint at any of the divisional offices as follows:

Police Complaints Division (North)
First floor Matco Building
No. 112 Henry Street, Port of Spain

Police Complaints Division (Eastern)
Maloney Police Station
Flamingo Boulevard, Maloney, D'Abadie

Police Complaints Division (South)
Police Administration Building
Court Street, San Fernando

At any of these offices you can submit a complaint to the Divisional Commander in charge of the Division where the incident occurred. Please ensure that you are provided with a copy of your report.

While the complaints procedures above are outlined and are publicly accessible, making a complaint may not be easy and can be re-traumatising. CAISO's Wholeness & Justice programme is here to help!

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Wholeness & Justice responds to violations experienced by LGBTQI+ persons in Trinidad and Tobago through the delivery of three types of services. These include:

- Legal support for clients who experience any violations, acts of discrimination, or abuse.
- Clinical (psycho-social) support to members of the LGBTQI+ community, who have experienced a violation and, as a result, may require mental support while managing the legal process.
- Wholeness Development which involves guidance and support in managing day-to-day life challenges, including financial planning, exercise and activity routines, connecting with service providers and engaging different agencies and bodies.

Wholeness & Justice is also committed to engaging community development initiatives and working to build capacity among service providers accessed by LGBTQI+ people. Members of the community who may have experienced a violation by members of the TTPS or who have encountered difficulty getting assistance from the TTPS can contact the programme for support. Such support may include:

- Assistance with making police reports
- Accompaniment to police stations
- Advice and representation for violations
- Freedom of Information applications
- Assistance with making a complaint to the PCA or PCD

Contact Us

LGBTQI+ people are encouraged to reach out to the Programme if they believe they have experienced a violation or are interested in knowing what their rights are in a particular situation. The programme can be contacted via:

Phone: 1-868-282-2476

Email: wholenessandjustice@caisott.org

Programme hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

