

COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRES: A US-UK EXCHANGE

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Abstract

This article seeks to provide some background information on community justice centres in the US and the pilot North Liverpool Community Justice Centre - the results of an international roundtable, convened by the Center for Court Innovation and the Office for Public Management, that took place in London towards the end of 2004. Along the way, this paper seeks to begin to answer the following three questions: (1) can justice be 'co-produced' by citizens and criminal justice officials?; (2) what does community justice mean to both American and British audiences; and (3) what are the implications of community justice for how we think about the relationship between government and citizens? The article shows that the concept of community justice has a diversity of meanings attached to it, but there are two common themes. First, there is an emphasis on problem solving approaches, underpinned by a commitment to focusing on wider community safety issues rather than the administrative concerns of simply processing cases through the criminal justice system. Secondly, community justice works to ensure citizens are fully engaged with the criminal justice system, in particular by identifying local priorities and creating solutions to local problems. The article is divided into three main sections. First, the notion of the Community Justice Centre is put into context by considering the Red Hook Community Justice Center in the United States. The second part examines the adaptation of American thinking and practice in North Liverpool, England. The third part reports on a day long event convening more than twenty academics, policy makers and practitioners from the US and UK in a discussion on the practical application of the principles of community justice.