

ROUTLEDGE FOCUS



COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRES

New Trajectories in Law

Sarah Murray

ROUTLEDGE

Focus

Community Justice Centres

This book examines the phenomenon of Community Justice Centres and their potential to transform the justice landscape by tackling the underlying causes of crime.

Marred by recidivism, addiction, family violence, overflowing courtrooms, crippling prison spending and extreme rates of incarceration, the criminal justice system is in crisis. Community Justice Centres seek to combat this by tackling the underlying causes of crime in a particular neighbourhood and working with local people to redesign the experience of justice and enhance the notion of community. A Community Justice Centre houses a court which works with an interdisciplinary team to address the causes of criminality such as drug addiction, cognitive impairment, mental illness, poverty, abuse and intergenerational trauma. The community thus becomes a key agent of change, partnering with the Centre to tackle local issues and improve safety and community cohesion. This book, based on research into this innovative justice model, examines case studies from around the world, the challenges presented by the model and the potential for bringing its learnings into the mainstream.

This book will appeal to academics in law and criminology as well as psychology; it will also be of considerable interest to people working in the criminal justice system, including the police, government policy advisers, psychologists and social workers.

Dr Sarah Murray is a Professor of Law at the University of Western Australia Law School where she researches in the areas of constitutional law and court innovation.

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New Trajectories in Law**

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**To Timothy and Jenny Ford – for being the bravest of
the brave.**



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Preface

On my first visit to a Community Justice Centre a security guard offered me a hot chocolate and then promptly appeared with a jar of marshmallows. My PhD supervisor with his ever good humour and light-heartedness later asked me, when I recounted this unusual court experience, whether I thought the model was ‘soft on justice?’ Although said in jest, Community Justice Centres have often attracted these sorts of questions. This book brings together research and experiences to be able to better respond to those questions.

Community Justice Centres provide a fascinating glimpse into what bringing justice to the local level can look like. They prompt us to question the ‘business as usual’ operation of our legal institutions by seeking to tackle the complex web of issues that can bring someone before a court. They move beyond responding to a criminal charge to preventing them from recurring. By getting to know and connecting with the heart-beat of a neighbourhood they fashion partnerships and networks that can address both community well-being and the unique justice profile of a locale. The Community Justice Model provides an open model that each jurisdiction can make its own to begin to reconfigure the place of courts in society. In this book, I have tried to better understand what form(s) this refashioned role can take, but also what it might mean for the justice system more broadly.

Thank you to all my family and friends for your support. To Ian, Kit and Charlotte – thank you for walking with me on this community justice journey and for following me internationally to pursue it (with my daughter asking repeatedly whether we could find a Community Justice Centre where bagpipes were played!). To Deanne, Teresa, Yasmin, Laura and Miri and a host of other wonderful buddies who have helped me to keep the dream of this work alive. And to Suzie – I couldn’t have got this far without you!

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