



Press Release

On Friday 28 September, 70 people attended to listen to Greg Berman from the Centre for Court Innovation in New York share his expertise in setting up a new approach to justice.

The event which was organised by Community Justice Scotland was held in Lochardil House Hotel in Inverness and was introduced by their Chief Executive Karyn McCluskey.

The Inverness Justice Centre will be the first purpose-built justice centre in Scotland. It is hoped this will provide a unique opportunity to bring organisations together, focusing on problem-solving approaches to reduce reoffending and possibly increase the opportunity for community sentencing.

As part of the work in preparing for the Centre, Greg Berman from the Centre for Court Innovation, New York, a world leader in a smarter justice approach to reducing incarceration and problem-solving courts was invited to speak in Inverness. He was directly involved in setting up the Red Hook Court in Brooklyn.

Greg focussed on the key lessons from successful programs across the USA - engaging the public in preventing crime, treating all defendants with dignity and respect and linking people to effective community-based interventions rather than locking them up.

Independent evaluators tracked 3,000 defendants from Red Hook and conventional courts for 2 years. They found that adult offenders at Red Hook were 10% less likely to be rearrested than offenders in the conventional court and this rose to 20% for young offenders.

Confidence and support in the court system from the local community rose significantly to 94% in the first 8 years of its inception. Confidence in the court system prior to this had been as low as 12%.

Greg also spoke about some of the learning from the Centre for Court Innovation, and the pioneering work in Red Hook Court in Brooklyn, Mid Town Court and many others, and the lessons we might learn in the development of the new Justice Centre in Inverness.

Speaking about the different approach taken Greg asked, “What does the Sheriff in Red Hook consider?” 1. Protecting community and public safety 2. What does this person need to get their life back on track?

Not only did the Sheriffs take a different approach, much planning went into the process, from the layout of the building and facilities to the training of staff which has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Red Hook Justice Centre.