

# Enhanced Combination Orders

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**Summary:** There has been recent debate on the value of community sentences in their own right rather than as an alternative to custody. For most people, punishment in the criminal justice system is synonymous with imprisonment. However, the number of people under some form of community supervision, both in Europe and in the USA, far exceeds the numbers in prison. It remains the case in these islands that offenders who commit violence or pose a risk of harm to others should be detained in a secure setting to protect the public. However, with a growing focus on outcomes, and an acknowledgement that short prison sentences (less than 12 months) are expensive and ineffective in preventing further offending, this article will look at the development of one intensive alternative to custody in Northern Ireland – the Enhanced Combination Order (ECO) – and the use of a model as a framework for change.

**Keywords:** Enhanced Combination Order, sentencing, courts, community, probation, justice, evaluation, Northern Ireland.