

# What Exactly is a Community Service Order in Ireland?

**Eoin Guilfoyle\***

**Summary:** This article examines the Irish Community Service Order (CSO), from its origins to its present-day operation. It outlines how the Irish CSO differs from community service sanctions in other jurisdictions and highlights why it is important that there is clarity about what the CSO currently is in Ireland. While the legislation that introduced the CSO in Ireland was almost identical to the corresponding legislation in England and Wales, there were substantial differences between the English and Irish CSO. The author seeks to identify the limits and boundaries of the CSO in law and in practice in Ireland. He considers how far the use of the CSO could be expanded without net-widening or it being imposed on offenders for whom it is not appropriate. With the decline in CSO numbers in recent years and increasing knowledge on offenders' problems and needs, the author asks whether the CSO can or should adopt a rehabilitative purpose and approach.

**Keywords:** Community Service, imprisonment, sentencing, alternatives, community sanctions, rehabilitation.