

Supplement to the agenda for

Scrutiny Management Board

Monday 16 December 2024

1.00 pm

**Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane
Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC	3 - 10

Questions from members of the public – Scrutiny Management Board, 16 December 2024

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms Reid Hereford	<p>Per Local Authority Interactive Tool (31 March 2024), the rates per 10,000 children are:</p> <p>Children in care: Herefordshire: 114 Statistical Neighbours' average (SNs): 67</p> <p>Children in Need: Herefordshire: 466 SNs: 287</p> <p>Section 47 enquiries: Herefordshire: 276 SNs: 161</p> <p>Child Protection Plan: Herefordshire: 60 SNs: 34</p> <p>Cafcass care applications: Herefordshire: 10.30 SNs: 9.05</p> <p>In 2023-24, the Children and Young People Directorate spent £63,500,000 (budget: £51,800,000) ie overspent by £11,700,000, including £8,700,000 overspend on children in care.</p> <p>In 2024-25, according to Appendix C of Agenda Item 7, the "Approved Revenue Budget" of the Children and Young People Directorate is £67,222,000 (£64,919,000 plus "Supplementary Budget Approval" of £2,303,000). However, the above LAIT figures suggest that its budget is materially too high.</p>	Scrutiny Management Board

		Will Herefordshire Council establish a Reunification Team to reduce the number and cost of children in care and, if so, by when?	
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Response:

Reunification of children back to parental care is very much something we are supportive of and conscious to consider through our care planning for individual children. Where “reunification” is agreed we have our Edge of Care and Home team (ECHO) who offer support for rehabilitation programmes and this service has remained a central county wide service in our recent locality re-design so it is able to respond to all children in care cases wherever they reside. Please see attached parents leaflet outlining the offer and the professionals road map we follow. This is a substantive team of staff who work in addition to social workers and family support workers in our children in care and child protection teams to support in delivery against child protection and care plans to both keep children at home and to reunify them where it is safe and in their best interests.

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 2	Mr Jeremy Milln Hereford	<p>At the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board on 28th October, Herefordshire Council gave a glowing account of its project management. Members heard about the Council's knowledge system which stored relevant documentation so that another manager could pick things up straight away.</p> <p>Yet it had to admit at Council on 6th December that for the various active travel projects for which the last administration won considerable Government funding, most unprofessionally it minuted no record of its regular meetings with the DfT's Active Travel England. So much for the Nolan principles for openness and accountability. Given the limitations of Verto, this makes it impossible for anyone else to understand and scrutinise the process by which decisions are later made, essential if we are to evaluate them properly.</p> <p>The Council is asked to explain how it proposes to improve on this performance?</p>	Scrutiny Management Board

Response:

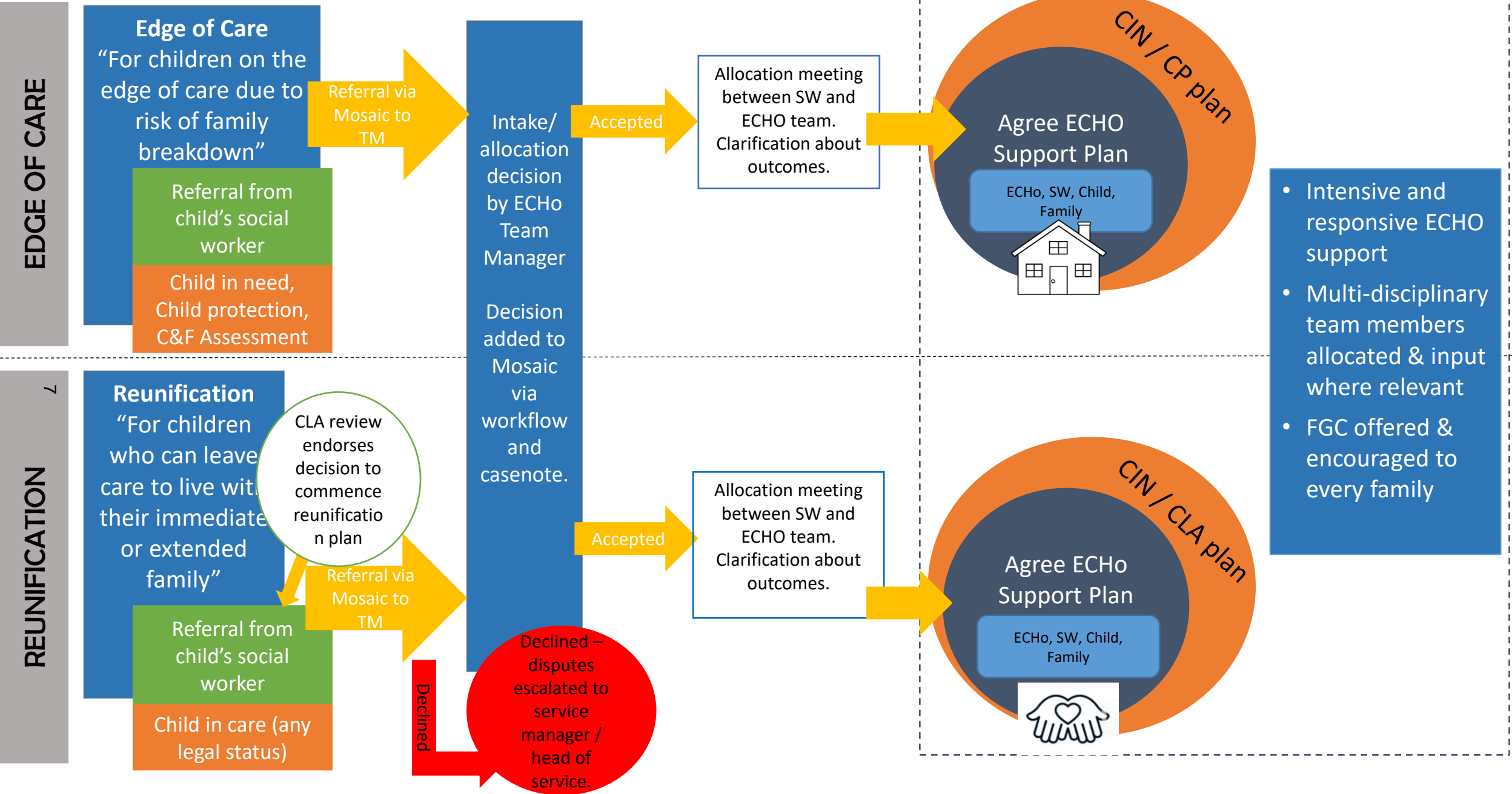
Thank you for your question. This question was answered twice at Council on Friday 6 December 2024. You can find the answer in the Council minutes at [Questions to Council](#).

Information for families about the Edge of Care / Home Team (ECHO)

- The ECHO team can assist you and your family in your most difficult times to support you to continue to care for your child at home safely.
- We also help children who are in care to return to live at home with their families.
- We are available to support you several times per week, even on weekends and evenings.
- We can help with parenting skills, managing relationships and healthy choices, among many other things that we do.
- Our team has family support workers, a family therapist, a domestic abuse specialist, and a recovery worker to help with substance misuse problems.
- We will work with you to implement an ECHO family support plan. This work takes place over a 3 to 6 month period.
- We also work closely with your social worker to make sure we are all achieving the best outcomes for families.



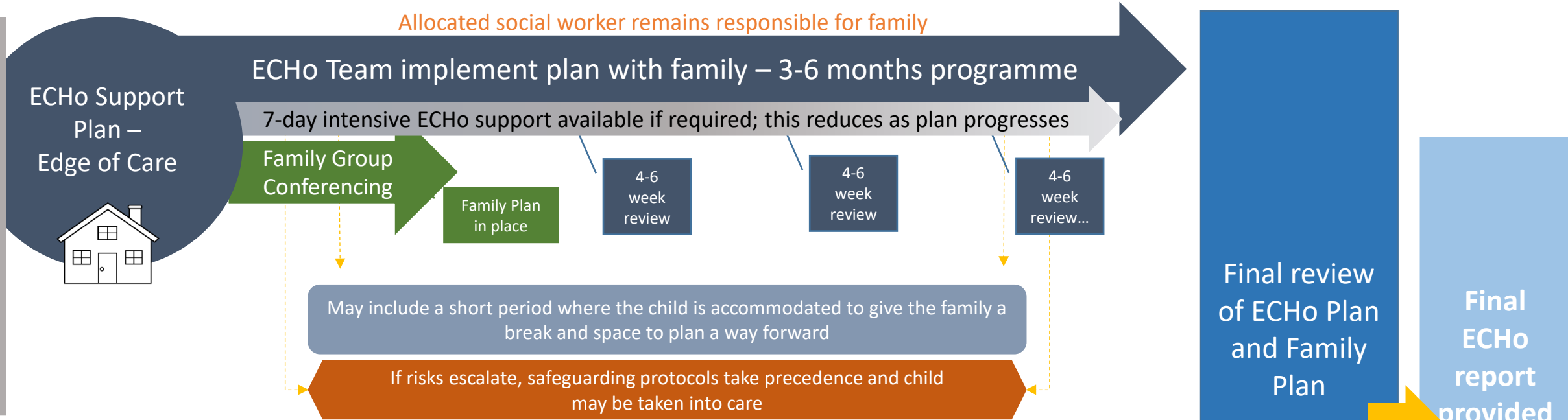
ECHO Road Map – Referrals and developing support plan



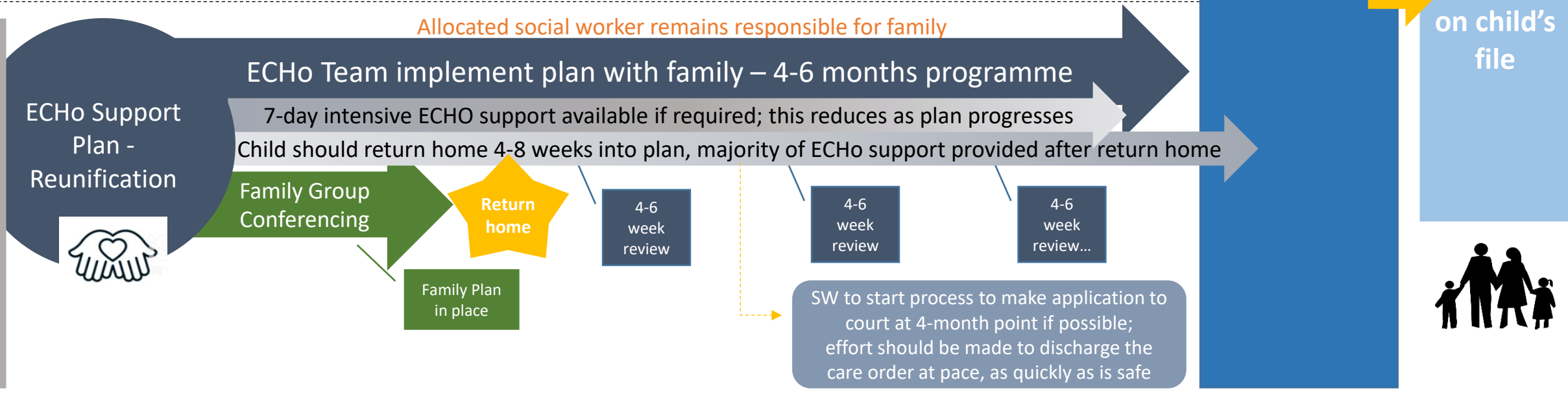
ECHO Road Map – Actions & Closure

EDGE OF CARE

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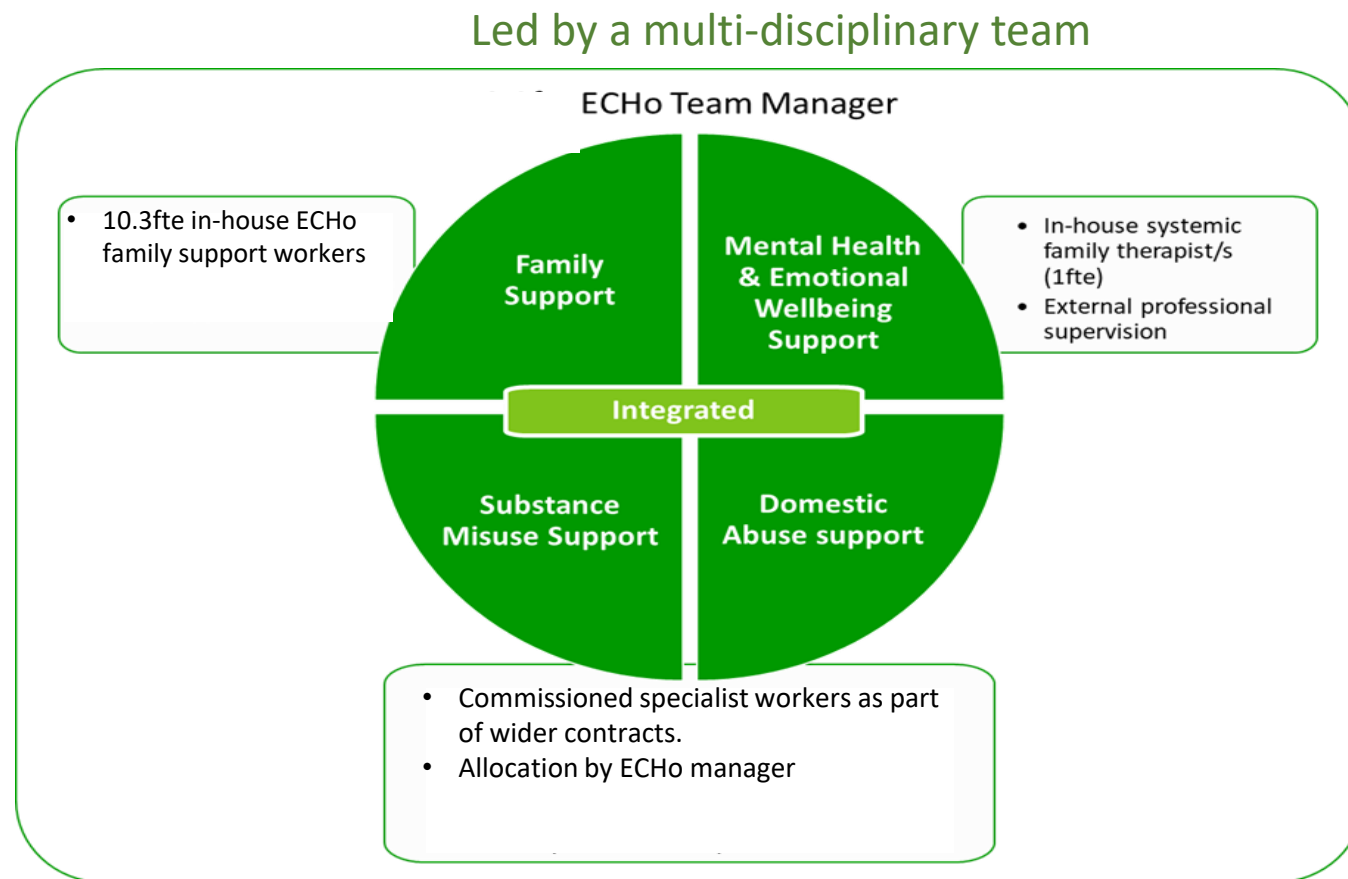
REUNIFICATION



ECHo (Edge of Care/Home) practice model

“The ECHo (Edge of Care/Home) model is relationship-based, strengths-based and solutions-focused”

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Core principles:

1. We work with the whole family, mainly in the home environment but also in other community settings
2. We dedicate more time to support individual families than other types family support or social care roles can normally offer
3. We work together as a multi-disciplinary team
4. We apply evidence-based interventions
5. We work with each child and family to develop clear and measurable goals, which we will review on a regular basis
6. We are responsive to changing needs
7. We work closely with the Safeguarding and Looked After services, with multi-agency partners and the voluntary sector

ECHO practice model (2)

