Learning experience 11: Do you understand my culture and traditions?

**Theme: Identity and Belonging, Aim 2 and Learning goal 3**

**Age group: Toddlers**

**Setting: Home and sessional service (playgroup)**

Joseph (2 years and 11 months) and his family are Travellers. They recently moved to the area and Joseph’s mammy, Kathleen, enrolled him for two mornings a week in the local playgroup. The manager, Joan, meets with Kathleen and explains how the service works and shows her the different rooms and the outdoor play area. Joan asks Kathleen about Joseph and his likes and dislikes. She explains that she knows very little about Traveller culture and traditions. Joan asks Kathleen to tell her a little about their way of life and the Traveller traditions that are important to her. Understanding these will help the staff to support Joseph. Kathleen tells Joan that as a family they generally travel in their trailer during the summer months and settle in one area for the rest of the year. She also explains that most Travellers are not as nomadic as they used to be. Kathleen says that Joseph loves animals, especially horses and dogs. She tells Joan that she doesn’t want Joseph to be discriminated against because he is a Traveller. She is worried because her older children had negative experiences in other settings.

In preparation for Joseph’s arrival, and with Kathleen’s help, Joan gets some books and jigsaws that depict Traveller life today. She organises displays of animals for Joseph to look at when he arrives. She tells the children that a new boy is joining them. A few days after Joseph’s arrival Joan talks to the children about their homes. She uses wall displays to reinforce some of the points they talk about. These include pictures of the children’s homes such as trailers, flats and terraced houses. They use these to talk about ‘where we live’. The children bring photographs of their families and homes, and make lollipop stick models of them using junk materials, fabrics, wool, glitter, fancy paper, and card. They display these beside their photographs. Over the coming days they enjoy sharing stories about their family, pets and outings. Joan observes the children during their activities and ensures Joseph is included and that he is beginning to form friendships. She updates Kathleen regularly on how he is settling in.

**Reflection: How much do the children and I know about each other’s family life and community?**