Learning styles and development activities

Learning styles are the different ways in which individuals learn, which can vary from person to person. For example one person may prefer to learn collaboratively in a group setting whereas another person may prefer to work on their own and at their own pace. Some may enjoy learning by 'having a go' while others prefer reading about the new area before being shown it step by step. When considering training and development activities the individual's learning preferences should be taken into consideration.

Once you have identified a particular development area, remember that there a wide range of ways to achieve that development. Many learning activities can be more than just 'going on a course'. A range of possible activities are listed below. Try to be creative when considering development activities with individuals.

- go on a course
- work shadow or swap
- find a mentor or be a mentor for someone else
- reading/research
- observe/speak to 'an expert'
- be 'the expert' and teach someone else
- take opportunity to practise
- attend a meeting/event that you would not usually
- work on a project with others
- delegation – done well this can provide many possibilities for development

If you do decide a course is the best activity to develop a skill or knowledge, consider different training formats which could include:

- Face to face training courses - which can suit those that prefer learning in a group setting.
- Online courses - which can suit those who prefer to learn on their own and at their own pace.
- On the job training - such as shadowing and learning from a colleague.
- Blended training courses - which provide a blend of online a face to face learning.
- Online seminars - which can provide opportunity to access the course without the need to attend in person.

How to ensure the development is effective
Once the development activity has been planned it is important to have a discussion before and after:

- **Before** - to highlight the objectives and any identify key aspects to focus on
- **After** – reflect and discuss how the new skill can be put into practice and any further relevant opportunities as appropriate