Opportunities to support and deliver people's development

Process	Commentary
Induction and probation	The first few weeks are critical to retention. Managers should play an active part in induction; ensuring people are welcomed and given all they need to be effective in their roles.
Appraisal	Perhaps the most 'intimate' process for identifying individual needs which can be task related (ideally reflecting specific goals) and also recognising personal aspirations. Appraisals should be positive experience based around constructive feedback, meaningful goals and ongoing development.
One to one discussion	Simple two-way discussion can be very effective and usually forms part of appraisal and other performance review processes. However, basing discussion around specific goals and performance criteria should maximise its effectiveness.
On-the-job training	Accounting for perhaps 80% of workplace learning, this is a key activity. Often delivered by other colleagues, the manager nonetheless needs to make sure it is effectively carried out and evaluated.
Coaching and mentoring	Developmental in themselves, both of these activities will often lead to the identification of development needs.
Observation and feedback	Very effective especially for behaviours and task related processes. Often used when people are in presentation situations, e.g. delivering training, teaching, lecturing, selling and in meetings.
Trying new ideas	Learning by mistakes is very effective and should be encouraged (in a controlled way) with a 'no blame' culture.
Group discussion	In team meetings and for projects, an effective way of sharing knowledge and experience with opportunities for developing themes.
Written communications	Policies, procedures, memo's, notices etc. all impart information that people need to know. This may be essentially factual, but additional explanation may help people to make the right decisions.
Away days	Away days are usually group workshops held away from the work place where some specific issues are discussed with a wide range of people. Often they are aimed at team building or for seeking innovative solutions to shared problems.
Formal training	Managers may deliver formal training sessions and will also be involved in identifying needs, perhaps arranging for activities to take place. Managers can also encourage and support their people to deliver training - a great development opportunity.

Ensuring new knowledge is used	Managers need to ensure people have opportunities and required support to use new knowledge in the workplace.
Reviewing and evaluating learning	Doing this helps people to consolidate and embed new practice.
Project work	Working on projects, often in other teams, almost always involves learning.
Secondments	Like projects, secondments are in themselves effective learning activities.
Giving leadership experience	Encouraging people to gain leadership experience helps them to develop the required skills and also raises awareness of the leader's role in an organisation.
Testing	Controlled and 'safe' – great for specific skills such as IT
Risk Assessments	Risk assessments should be carried out as part of the organisation's critical activities including Health and Safety. Issues which emerge, particularly if they indicate common failures in good practice should be recognised as potential development needs.
Skills Audit	Usually structured, a skills audit simply establishes what skills are in place in the team(s). If set against skills needs, it becomes a training needs analysis – see below.
Training Needs Analysis	Systematic collection of data about gaps in the existing skills, knowledge and attitudes of employees. Information on employees' capabilities is then compared to organisational needs for skills. Needs emerge from this.
Skills Matrix	A skills/training matrix can be a useful to aid development planning at team level and is particularly useful when addressing multi-skilling needs.
Team profiling	Tools for this include Belbin and Myers Briggs and need to be delivered by accredited people. They are very effective for developing an understanding of team dynamics. As well as helping to develop the team, individual needs will also emerge.
Structured vocational training	Some development activities, such as NVQ's will both identify capability and also further needs which will be picked up as part of the assessment process. Managers can both encourage and support people through these processes.
Succession planning	A process where suitable people are developed via training, experience, mentoring etc. to replace more senior staff who move, leave or retire. Such grooming is developmental and will also impact upon retention.