



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 2001

# Manchester Adult Education Service

## SUMMARY

Manchester Adult Education Service provides satisfactory prevocational training on its foundation for work programmes. The training in basic skills and jobsearch is good, however insufficient emphasis is placed on improving trainees and clients' employability skills. Good practice in equal opportunities is promoted throughout the organisation. Trainees are well supported and benefit from the good range of support facilities available throughout the service. Retention rates are good. Many of the arrangements to manage the training are satisfactory. Staff have good levels of expertise in teaching, but all aspects of the training are not sufficiently co-ordinated. The self-assessment procedures are well established and the quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Foundation for work	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly effective teaching sessions
- ◆ good development of trainees' skills
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ good opportunities for under-represented groups
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff
- ◆ extensive range of staff development
- ◆ effective use of self-assessment to drive forward continuous improvement
- ◆ established quality assurance procedures

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient emphasis on improving trainees' employability skills
- ◆ low job outcomes in work-based learning programme
- ◆ inadequate individual training plans
- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ weak internal verification procedures
- ◆ insufficient analysis of trainees' achievements and destinations

## INTRODUCTION

1. Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) has provided adult education within Manchester since the post-16 reorganisation in August 1990 resulted in the establishment of two further education colleges and an adult education service. MAES is directly managed by Manchester Local Education Authority (LEA) and, with a total of approximately 25,000 enrolments per year, is now one of the largest local authority providers of adult learning opportunities in the country. Adult education is part of the authority's education department, which reports to the chief education officer and Manchester City Council. MAES has contracted with Manchester training and enterprise council (TEC) since 1992 to provide prevocational training to long-term unemployed adults. The organisation first contracted in 1998 with the City Pride Unit of Delivery, to provide prevocational training for New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option.

2. The work-based training programmes are based in Miles Platting in East Manchester, at one of MAES' main adult learning centres. There are currently 14 trainees on the basic employability programme. Three New Deal clients aged between 18 and 24 years attend foundation training to help them improve their basic skills and personal skills to enhance their employability. In 1999-2000 there were 25,026 enrolments on MAES' courses. Of these, 123 enrolments were work-based learning trainees and New Deal clients. This work represented 0.5 per cent of all enrolments for that year. However, MAES adult and community learning programmes are predominantly part-time. The trainees and clients on government-funded vocational training programmes accounted for 77 per cent of the 160 people who enrolled on full-time learning programmes in 1999-2000. MAES currently has 738 staff. The equivalent of two and a half full-time posts are allocated to the vocational training programmes. In addition, three basic skills tutors and other specialist part-time tutors provide training on a part-time basis.

3. The Department of Environment's Index of Local Conditions ranks the City of Manchester as the thirteenth most deprived local authority in England, out of 366 districts. At 13 per cent, Manchester has a relatively high proportion of its residents who are members of minority ethnic groups. These groups are more likely to be unemployed, with approximately double the rate than that of the white population. Manchester's rate of unemployment, 4.4 per cent in November 2000, was slightly higher than the national average of 3.3 per cent. Some of the inner city wards where MAES carries out its work, have unemployment levels of up to 20 per cent. Long term unemployment continues to be significant, with a third of Manchester's claimants unemployed for over a year. According to data from the Basic Skills Agency in 1997-98, just over 20 per cent of Manchester's adult population (estimated at about 507,000 residents) have very low or low levels of literacy, compared with the national average of 15 per cent. In September 2000, the percentage of school leavers within the Manchester LEA achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above,



was 30.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

4. Manufacturing accounts for just over one third of the total employment (36.4 per cent in 1997) in east Manchester. Distribution, hotels and restaurants are the second largest area of work in the area (21 per cent in 1997) followed by the public service sector with 14.5 per cent. The Commonwealth games in 2002 present a unique opportunity for growth in employment in the near future. Other key areas identified for business development in east Manchester are computer software and related services, creative industries such as media, advertising and public relations, and tourism and leisure.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. MAES first produced a self-assessment report in December 1998. The organisation has continued to use the framework in *Raising the Standard* to develop a process of internal inspections, involving a structured review of the effectiveness of the teaching, and the administration and management of the programmes. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process, which is thorough. Staff contribute to the development of the reports, including the one developed in August 2000 for this inspection. Trainees' views, which are included in the reports, are collected through group discussions and using a questionnaire. All the reports have contained an action plan to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses.

6. Three inspectors spent a total of nine inspection days with MAES in January 2001. They interviewed 12 trainees and New Deal clients. Fifteen interviews were conducted with MAES staff, including the senior management team, and two members of other agencies who work with the organisation. Inspectors visited two employers providing work placements. They observed and graded six learning sessions and reviewed the personal files and training plans for the 17 trainees and clients in training at that time. Other documents reviewed included contracts with the TEC, reports from awarding bodies, the city council's health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance and operating manuals, staff development records, learning materials, marketing materials, achievement data, MAES, strategic and development plans and annual reports.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Foundation for work	0	5	1	0	0	6

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Foundation for work

### Grade 3

7. Fourteen trainees are currently on the basic employability programme attending the training centre in Miles Platting for up to 20 weeks. This includes a four-week period of work experience. The aims of the programme are to help unemployed adults to develop their employability skills and progress to employment. This has changed since 1997, when the main focus of the programme was to help trainees progress into higher levels of training. When trainees join the programme, their eligibility is checked by the Employment Service. Training is planned for 30 hours a week. Trainees work towards individual targets or milestones. These include developing jobsearch related skills, such as job applications, telephone skills and interviewing techniques. Most trainees work towards nationally recognised qualifications, such as basic first aid and basic food

hygiene. Trainees who have been assessed as having low levels of literacy or numeracy, work towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Three New Deal clients are currently on the 20-week prevocational training which forms part of the full-time education and training option. The aims of the training are to help clients achieve a qualification in basic skills at entry level, or achieve individual targets to improve their employability and help them progress to work or another option. All trainees and clients are encouraged to develop their skills in computing. Trainees work towards national qualifications in computer literacy and information technology. Three of the seven members of staff teaching the programmes are part-time employees of MAES, working on the foundation programmes between five and eight hours a week. The programme co-ordinator's post accounts for 0.5 of a full-time job. Three other trainers are full-time employees, teaching for up to 15 hours a week on the vocational programmes. The self-assessment report acknowledges trainees' low rates of progression into jobs. The report recognises the effective teaching, high retention rates and extensive range of learning resources. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and confirmed the grade given in the report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ particularly effective teaching sessions
- ◆ good development of trainees' skills
- ◆ highly individual learning activities
- ◆ good retention on work-based learning programmes

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient emphasis on improving trainees' employability skills
- ◆ low job outcomes in work-based learning programme
- ◆ insufficiently specific training targets

8. The training is well organised, making good use of the trainers' skills and experience. The training programme is varied, incorporating an extensive range of topics, such as basic skills, computing, computer mediated communication and jobsearch skills. Teaching staff are selected appropriately for the contribution they can make to the programme. They are well qualified and knowledgeable, providing appropriate levels of practical advice and guidance to help trainees and clients improve their skills. Learning sessions are well planned and structured. Staff use a good range of teaching methods and learning activities. For example, a member of staff has recently developed a project on citizenship, which successfully helps trainees examine people's rights and responsibilities as members of local communities. Trainees and clients are highly motivated and participate well during the sessions and in group work, developing their confidence in their communication skills and their ability to work effectively in teams. Staff use a wide range of highly appropriate learning resources, including multi-media

equipment. Many resources have been specifically developed by the teaching staff to meet the learning needs of individual trainees. These are well designed, with well-written instructions and helpful explanations and exercises.

9. Trainees' and clients' individual learning needs are carefully considered, when staff design weekly training plans. Staff make good use of initial assessment to identify the most appropriate milestones and vocational qualifications to help trainees and clients improve their skills. Staff use this information effectively to draw up timetables of activities for groups and individuals each week. This information is displayed clearly in the training centre in different formats. Trainees and clients understand which activities they should attend and how these relate to their individual goals. MAES successfully uses all the learning resources available within the organisation. For example, part-time staff are employed as required to provide training in specific skills, such as manual handling and basic first aid.

10. Trainees and clients make good progress towards their learning goals. Many of them join MAES with little or no experience of computers and see this as a significant barrier to employment. The organisation provides a good range of training in computing skills at appropriate levels, from beginner to above level 1. Trainees make good progress in computing and progress to higher levels, as appropriate. Most trainees and clients make significant improvements in their levels of literacy. They use a progress file to record the areas they need to work on, such as sentence structure or punctuation, and keep a record of their progress and further areas to improve. The job-seeking activities and other group work are successful in helping trainees and clients improve their interpersonal skills and confidence in tackling different situations.

11. The retention rates on the basic employability programme are good. In 1998-99, 55 of the 73 trainees (75 per cent) remained on the programme for at least 18 weeks, achieving at least two milestones. The following year, 83 per cent of the 60 trainees who started the programme, stayed for at least 18 weeks, completing at least two milestones. However, too few basic employability trainees have progressed to employment. From April 1998 to March 2000, only 8 per cent of trainees achieved jobs each year and only 10 per cent of the 27 trainees who have left since April 2000 have progressed to a job.

12. Although the staff make good use of initial assessment to determine the trainees' and clients' learning programmes, they pay insufficient attention to the trainees' employment goals. Very few of the trainees' employment aspirations are included on their individual training plans. Staff do not put sufficient emphasis on identifying and addressing trainees' and clients' barriers to employment. The jobsearch training gives trainees and clients good opportunities to develop their understanding of the skills required to apply for jobs. This is effectively linked to help trainees develop their basic skills and interpersonal skills. However, the other activities trainees do to help improve their literacy, numeracy and computing skills are not sufficiently linked to the context of work. For example, the activities used to assess trainees literacy for the wordpower qualifications are primarily based on personal interests, life skills and their experiences as a trainee on the programme.

Too few trainees are aware of the specific employability skills they need to develop to improve their chances of sustained work in their chosen occupational areas. Too few trainees are given opportunities for work experience. In 1999-2000 only nine of the 60 trainees took up work placements. However, MAES has recognised this weakness and has allocated a member of staff to spend more time to develop work placement opportunities. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of trainees who have had work experience as part of their programme. About one third of trainees have taken up work placements since April 2000.

13. Most trainees and clients are not aware of some of their specific learning targets. Few trainees know when they are expected to complete a milestone or qualification. This information is not adequately recorded on their learning plans. The individual training plans for New Deal clients do not contain sufficient information. In 1998-1999, 58 per cent of the 33 New Deal clients completed their training plans and 20 per cent achieved a job. The retention rates, at 64 per cent were good. In 1999-2000, 49 per cent of the 43 leavers completed their plans and 21 per cent gained work. Seventeen of the 18 who left with no qualification or job, left within 8 weeks of starting. Eleven of the 31 clients who have left MAES since April 2000, have completed their training plans and six have found work. At 35 per cent and 17 per cent, this is a decrease in the achievement rates of the two previous years. However, the organisation's figures remain higher than those of other organisations providing training for New Deal clients in the area.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

14. As a service of Manchester City Council, MAES operates within the council's equal opportunities policy. The policy makes reference to current legislation, with explicit reference to equality of opportunity, regardless of age, class, disability, gender, race and sexuality issues. The senior management team at the city council annually reviews the policy. All staff and trainees are made aware of the policy and procedures at induction. Staff receive a copy of the policy in their staff induction pack and all trainees receive a handbook which includes the policy. The publicity and marketing materials contain a statement that outlines the council's commitment to promoting equal opportunities. Employers providing work placements, sign an agreement to say that they agree to abide by the council's equal opportunities policy. MAES' staff use a database to collect information on trainees' ethnicity, gender, disability and postcode. This information is used by the management team to target specific groups they perceive to be the under-represented among their learners. Most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. The report did not identify any weaknesses. Inspectors found additional strengths and one weakness. They confirmed the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ good opportunities for under-represented groups
- ◆ trainees' good understanding of equal opportunities

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*Previous trainees and clients have written summaries of their understanding of equal opportunities. This work is displayed in the training room used by trainees and clients. This is good practice because it encourages trainees and clients to consolidate their views on equal opportunities. The displays are used to promote discussion on equal opportunities among new trainees and clients and other visitors to the training room.*

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient systematic monitoring of equal opportunities

15. There is good promotion of equal opportunities within MAES. The organisation's marketing materials have been effectively designed to promote their work to learners not traditionally represented on their courses. For example, some posters include information in the languages spoken by local residents and provide a telephone number for further translation services. The brochures on MAES' courses accurately describe the full range of facilities for people with restricted mobility. These brochures and other publicity materials include images that challenge gender stereotyping. MAES strictly adheres to the council's equal opportunities policy when recruiting part-time and full-time employees. Staff attend training in an extensive range of topics relating to the promotion of equal opportunities, such as valuing diversity and intercultural communication. Staff, including part-time staff, have a good understanding of issues about equality and use staff meetings effectively to discuss incidents or issues that have arisen during their work. Staff have developed an effective procedure to ensure that all employers providing work experience have an equal opportunities policy and will offer support to the employer if they need assistance in drafting and implementing a policy. At their progress reviews in the workplace, trainee and clients are systematically asked if there are any specific equal opportunities issues. However, there is no specific section on the review form to record any information or how issues raised have been tackled. More formal complaints are systematically recorded and reviewed.

16. The discussions in staff meetings have led the staff to be self-critical about the way they promote equal opportunities to trainees and clients. Induction training includes an initial assessment to identify trainees' current knowledge of equal opportunities issues and their training needs in this area. The training that follows is well structured and imaginatively presented, involving lively discussion of the equal opportunities policy and the council's code of practice. Trainees and clients have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and are able to speak confidently about equal opportunities issues they had been unaware of before they joined MAES. This training is not restricted to the induction programme. Trainees and clients are successfully encouraged to use relevant incidents they have directly observed or seen on television or in newspapers to perpetuate discussion on equal opportunities. Staff and trainees use the partition screen in the main training room effectively to raise awareness of equal opportunities to visitors to the training centre. For example, this screen currently displays trainees' writing on their perception of equal opportunities and a leaflet

about racial issues in English and other languages.

17. The introduction of work-based learning to MAES' programmes provide an example of the organisation's success in promoting good learning opportunities for under-represented groups. The work-based learning programme was included as part of the service's strategy to widen participation. The monitoring data were used to confirm views that very few white men who had been long-term unemployed joined the MAES programmes. Nationally, and locally, over 70 per cent of participants in adult education are women. After successful recruitment of unemployed men, MAES designed and disseminated specific marketing materials to promote this programme to unemployed women. This resulted in an increase of up to 40 per cent of women on the vocational training. Of the 179 trainees and 117 clients who started vocational training in 1999-2000, 65 per cent were men, 7 per cent were from minority ethnic communities and 23 per cent were people with disabilities.

18. The equal opportunities policy is well written. It clearly outlines the council's values on a range of aspects selected to promote equality of opportunity. However, MAES does not systematically monitor the procedures to implement these values. Some practices to promote equal opportunities, such as the recruitment of staff, are effectively monitored. Inappropriate behaviour by staff or users of the service is effectively addressed, but these incidents are not always recorded. Not all staff or employers providing work placements are aware of how the council's policy is monitored.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 2**

19. Trainees and New Deal clients are mostly referred to MAES from the Employment Service. Some people apply directly to the centre as a result of recommendation from other trainees, training providers offering the Gateway, and in response to local advertising. At the initial interview, trainees' eligibility for the programme is established and then confirmed by the Employment Service. Trainees are all assessed for their levels of basic skills, using the Basic Skills Agency screening test. During the induction period, further interviews and the assessment of basic skills identifies learning goals which are recorded on the individual learning plans. Trainees' progress is reviewed at least every two weeks. All trainees and clients have access to advice and guidance from qualified specialist staff who work across the organisation. A helpline is available once a week, to enable trainees to arrange appointments with MAES staff. Trainees and clients receive an information handbook including a comprehensive list of additional support agencies. New Deal clients have the same opportunities for additional support as the work-based learning trainees. Their progress is initially reviewed every week for the first four weeks, before the interviews are arranged every two weeks. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. Some state the availability of facilities to support trainees and clients, but do not include a judgement on their use or effectiveness.

The weakness identified is no longer relevant. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and confirmed the grade given in the report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ particularly effective personal support
- ◆ well-structured induction
- ◆ good training in jobsearch skills
- ◆ frequent progress reviews

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate individual training plans
- ◆ insufficient recording of additional support

20. MAES' staff are highly effective in identifying trainees additional support needs, using a good variety of assessment and offering trainees and clients confidential interviews. They are sensitive in their approach and are skilled at encouraging trainees and clients to discuss the problems that may be preventing them from achieving their learning goals. Trainees and clients benefit from the extensive range of support services available at MAES, and the city council. Referrals to these services are well managed and, where appropriate, appointments are arranged promptly. The support provided by MAES includes individual training, counselling and equipment. For example, each of MAES' 20 main learning centres employs a well-qualified and experienced specialist tutor to provide individual support and advice for dyslexic learners. The provision of specialist equipment, such as documents and materials in large print or Braille, loop hearing system, magnifiers for visual display units, is comprehensive and well co-ordinated.

21. The induction training programme is well planned. The quality of the sessions is high. They are well presented, using a good variety of methods, including a computerised slideshow, combined with handouts and discussions on the pertinent issues. Trainees and clients participate well. Existing trainees and clients join the sessions on health and safety. This enables them to build their confidence in working with other people, and offers good role models to those new to MAES. The handbook is user-friendly, providing a comprehensive source of information.

22. Good training in jobsearch skills starts soon after trainees and clients join the programme. There are ample good-quality resources, including a wide range of up-to-date multi-media equipment. For example, trainers use interesting and informative videos to help trainees and clients to prepare for job interviews. Mock interviews are recorded onto video. Trainees and clients are given constructive, realistic feedback on their performance. Training sessions in jobsearch are well structured and comprehensively planned. Staff have a good awareness of trainees'

and clients' learning needs in literacy and effectively link training in literacy to job seeking activities. Trainees and clients make good progress in acquiring job-seeking skills, especially interview skills. MAES effectively uses its contacts within the city council and the Employment Service to provide up-to-date information on job vacancies. This is supplemented by a good range of local newspapers, information available on the Internet and presentations from an agency promoting job vacancies and advertisements from other agencies. Tutors work well with trainees and clients to plan and check the appropriateness of their job applications. However, MAES does not sufficiently analyse unsuccessful job applications to identify further or new approaches to help trainees and clients be more successful. All trainees and clients use a national record of achievement. They benefit from being part of a large adult education service. Posters about the service and other marketing materials are prominently displayed at all the MAES learning centres, raising trainees' and clients' awareness of other learning opportunities and other learners' achievements. Advice is given should learners wish to continue with further education.

23. The reviews of trainees' and clients' progress is given a high priority at MAES. The review process is well managed. A display board is used effectively to monitor the frequency of fortnightly review interviews, which are invariably carried out as planned. All of the seven teaching staff have been trained effectively to carry out reviews. Staff give trainees and clients ample opportunity to discuss their progress and, where applicable, effectively incorporate feedback from employers. Retention rates on the basic employability programmes are good. Although the team has recently revised the documents used to record the reviews, comments are scant. Not all trainees or clients are given a record of the interview, but they are able to obtain them from the central office.

24. The individual training plans are inadequately used. Although they are updated during reviews with dates of planned appointments and a brief synopsis of what has been discussed, very little other detail is added. Few plans include trainees' and clients' job goals and there are few target dates for the achievement of learning goals. Trainees do not receive a copy of their training plan until they leave the programme. The training plans do not have sufficient information about the type of additional support trainees and clients require. Any additional support provided is not systematically recorded. Trainees' and clients' individual timetables show when they need to attend additional individual training sessions, but there are insufficient central records of the range and extent of additional support provided to trainees and clients.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

25. All the people who work for MAES are employees of the city council. The head of lifelong learning reports to the chief education officer and the city council through the annual departmental service plan. MAES also reports to the city council executive members for education on the development and quality of the

service. It reports on particular aspects of the service to the relevant city council scrutiny committees. MAES works within the policy framework set by the city council. It adapts some of these policies to meet the requirements of other funding bodies, such as the TEC. The strategic plan covers the whole adult education service and provides direction for all parts of the service. The prevocational team is a very small part of the service and is the responsibility of the senior manager for widening participation. Management structure, roles and responsibilities are stated in the staff handbook. MAES was restructured in September 2000 and there is a separate organisation chart for the prevocational training. Staff development is linked to the appraisal system. Formal appraisals take place every two years. All employees working more than six hours a week have supervision meetings with their team leader at least twice a year, to review their training and development need and targets, in relation to their job roles and responsibilities. MAES first achieved the Investors in People standard in 1996. Inspectors agreed with strengths relating to qualified staff and staff development. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff
- ◆ extensive range of staff development

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ some narrow target-setting

26. Staff working with trainees and New Deal clients have appropriate qualifications and an extensive range of relevant experience. MAES places high emphasis on the need for all teaching staff to have relevant qualifications and skills in teaching adult learners. All staff involved in teaching on the prevocational training programmes have appropriate teaching qualifications. Several have qualifications in teaching basic skills. Staff regularly attend a range of training courses which help keep their knowledge up to date and raise their awareness of relevant topics, such as dyslexia and understanding different cultures. The arrangements for staff training are efficient and well organised. For example, staff who are promoted to team leaders, start a training programme soon after their appointment. Learning objectives include working towards relevant qualifications and attending courses to learn specific skills relevant to their new role. These include leadership skills, how to observe the delivery of training and monitor quality procedures.

27. MAES gives staff development a high priority in its strategic planning. Induction of new staff is thorough and well managed. An annual survey of training needs is used effectively to identify organisational, local and individual needs that are incorporated into the annual staff development plan. Employees' training and development objectives are well linked to their job roles and responsibilities. The

supervision meetings are used effectively to monitor tutors' training targets and evaluate the effectiveness of training they have undertaken. The procedure for applying for staff development is regularly revised and circulated. All training is evaluated thoroughly to identify how well it meets its objectives and the learning needs of the members of staff.

28. Many of the arrangements to manage the training are satisfactory. Since the restructuring of the work-based training section, staff have introduced a range of new working practices and systems. Recent improvements to address identified weaknesses in internal communications are beginning to take effect. For example, team members' job roles and responsibilities are now more clearly defined. There are better opportunities for all staff, particularly those who are part-time, to share and exchange ideas through regular staff meetings and team briefings. Part-time tutors are now allowed up to 12 paid hours a year to attend meetings and take part in development activities. Staff use these opportunities to manage the training and co-ordinate the trainees' and clients' individual timetables. Some systems are not fully established. Many of the meetings are informal and are not sufficiently recorded. Staff are still looking at the structure and content of programmes in order to improve training. The management information systems have been improved and are now adequate. Databases have been set up to monitor trainees' and clients progress and achievements. These databases are being developed further.

29. Management of the separate components that make up the individual training plans, such as improving personal effectiveness, job seeking and computer skills, are not sufficiently co-ordinated. The range of activities covered while trainees and clients are at the adult learning centre, is not sufficiently linked to the activities they do on work placement. Employers are not given enough information about the stage the trainees and clients have reached in their training programme or how their experience at work can be used to help them apply what they have already learned.

30. Work-based learning was included in the MAES' programmes to meet a need identified as part of the service's strategy to widen participation. Additional resources were identified in 1996 to set up and support the programme. However, the objectives for work-based training programmes and training in the New Deal option are primarily linked to meeting contractual targets. Targets for a new contract are largely based on achievement of the previous year's contract. There are insufficient links between the strategic planning and the setting of contractual targets. Although the organisation is recruiting the agreed numbers of trainees and clients each year, it is not meeting some of the other targets, such as the number of people progressing into work. The operational strategic plans for this area of work do not sufficiently address this shortfall. MAES has a service-wide strategy to work with employers and other members of the community to develop regeneration projects to help meet local residents' social and economic needs. Managers are not sufficiently maximising the opportunities to relate the work which other sections of the service are developing with employers, to the work of the work-based training section.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

31. The Head of MAES has overall responsibility for the quality of MAES courses and training programmes. The senior manager for curriculum is responsible for the quality assurance of the work-based training programmes. Quality assurance procedures at MAES include an annual self-assessment on the quality of teaching and learning, using the quality statements in *Raising the Standard* and other relevant frameworks. This includes systematic observation of learning sessions. The quality assurance procedures for the work-based programmes meet the requirements of the TEC and the awarding bodies. The MAES quality assurance manual, which is kept in the main office, also incorporates the procedures that relate specifically to the work-based training programmes. The views of trainees and clients are gathered during their training and when they leave. An annual report, prepared every April, is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes. MAES first achieved the quality mark from the Basic Skills Agency in 1995. Inspectors agreed with all of the strengths and the one weakness cited in the report. They identified additional weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given the self-assessment report.

### GOOD PRACTICE

*Managers and team leaders use a comprehensive information pack and guidelines when observing learning sessions. It contains detailed information for observers and tutors, with specific guidelines about the observation process and criteria for recognising good practice and identifying training needs. This helps ensure that the process is consistent throughout the organisation.*

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of self-assessment to drive forward continuous improvement
- ◆ established quality assurance procedures
- ◆ effective procedures for monitoring the quality of training

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak internal verification procedures
- ◆ insufficient analysis of trainees' achievements and destinations
- ◆ insufficient use of feedback from employers and trainees

32. Quality assurance arrangements are systematic and well documented. MAES has successfully developed the self-assessment process, required by the TEC, so that it has become a framework for the service's quality assurance. Self-assessment has been carried out annually over a period of four years. Staff are fully involved in the process. The organisation has adopted a self-critical approach, but also recognises the strengths in the service it offers. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report and changed only one grade. The action plans that are produced as part of the self-assessment process, set appropriate targets with realistic timescales and milestones to recognise achievement. The plans are systematically reviewed, discussed and updated at meetings with staff. This process has effectively brought about improvements to both work-based training and the training offered to New Deal. For example, more effective methods have been developed to record the initial assessments and the induction training programme has been restructured to make it more interesting

and effective. Improvements also include the introduction of new computer courses to the curriculum.

33. The quality assurance systems used by the work-based learning team to ensure that practices are consistent throughout the programmes, are well established. They cover all key aspects of training. All written procedures included in the quality assurance manual are updated and reviewed twice a year by the team manager. These include procedures relating to trainees' recruitment and selection, initial assessment, induction, trainee complaints, raising equal opportunity awareness, placement arrangements and exit interviews. Staff are familiar with the procedures that refer to this area of work. They have a good understanding of the function and purpose of the quality assurance system. Quality procedures also relate to management and administration of the training. Auditing of the system focuses on the training processes. The recruitment and induction of trainees and staff are monitored thoroughly. Thorough checks are made to ensure that all staff follow the agreed procedures and that their work is of a high quality. New staff work closely with an experienced colleague, for example, when enrolling a new trainee, until it is agreed that they are competent to work alone.

34. The quality assurance procedures include thorough monitoring of the effectiveness of the training sessions. Managers and team leaders observe staff teaching at all stages of the training programmes. For example, they use detailed forms to record information that relates to teaching and learning methods and teaching styles. Observations also monitor how well tutors give attention to equal opportunities and the exploration of cultural, moral and social issues. Trainers receive constructive feedback on their performance, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Full explanations are given on how the observer reached the judgements, using teaching and learning quality criteria published in the guidelines. Suggested action points for staff development are clearly recorded, where applicable, and these are discussed immediately with line managers to ensure rapid implementation. The quality of the teaching on the work-based learning programmes is good. Staff make good use of the support they receive from managers and other members of the training team.

35. Internal verification procedures for the assessment of work-based learning are weak. A booklet giving guidelines on internal verification and moderation procedures is distributed to all staff involved in assessing learners. However, there is no overall internal verification policy. Sampling of assessments only takes place at the end of the training programme. Issues relating to the quality of assessments are not dealt with swiftly. Feedback to assessors lacks detail and is not always recorded on the appropriate forms, as required. There are no regularly planned meetings with assessors to discuss assessment procedures. The internal verifier does not observe assessments taking place in accordance with the awarding bodies' requirements. However, new staff are currently undergoing training in internal verification procedures.

36. MAES has well-established procedures to gain information from trainees and clients on their views on the quality of the training. Feedback, sought from trainees

through comments and suggestions boxes, supplements the information gained through using questionnaires. However, the language on some of the questionnaires is complicated and difficult for trainees and clients with literacy difficulties to read and understand. Feedback is not systematically analysed and some valuable information is not sufficiently used, although significant points highlighted by trainees and clients during group discussions are raised with staff. Trainees and clients are not given a summary of the results of any surveys or any improvements that have been made as a result of the exercise. The views of employers are not collected.

37. The annual report includes analyses of the department's achievement against the TEC contract. This includes benchmarking and contains comparative data relating to other training providers. Success is measured against the contract value and not against trainees' and clients' original learning goals. There is no clear analysis of trainees and clients who have achieved wordpower, numberpower or additional qualifications, such as manual handling and first aid. There is no detailed analysis of destination data in order to prepare future trainees better for careers in which they are likely to work. Although staff keep a record of whether trainees and clients progress to jobs or other training when they leave the vocational training, there is insufficient use of the information gained on the types of jobs obtained or options that New Deal clients move on to. This information is not used sufficiently to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. The outcomes for New Deal have decreased over a period of three years. Although there is an understanding of the reasons behind this, there is no clear plan of action to improve the situation.