INSPECTION REPORT

Manor Training & Resource Centre Limited

21 May 2004

ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:
- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

INSPECTION REPORT

Manor Training & Resource Centre Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Manor Training and Resource Centre (MATREC) is a registered charity and limited company, founded in 1987 and located in the Manor ward of Sheffield. It offers training for the local adult community in business administration, teacher training, information and communications technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy, general certificates of secondary education English and mathematics, cake decorating, and counselling. Training takes place on the two main sites, and on the premises of four partner organisations within a three-mile radius.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

2. MATREC has 106 learners in this area of learning. Fifty-one learners are on bookkeeping courses at introductory and level 1 or 2. Nine learners are on an Open College Network (OCN) payroll course, 33 on keyboard courses and 13 are working towards level 1 and 2 in nationally recognised awards in office skills. All the courses are available at the Manor Training centre for periods of from 10 to 30 weeks. Daytime courses are offered each week, Monday to Thursday. There is no weekend provision. Since September 2003 a total of 391 learners have enrolled on courses. This compares with total enrolments in the year 2002-03 of 173 learners.

Information & communications technology

3. In total, MATREC has 584 learners covering a wide age range. At the time of inspection there were 35 courses. All courses are accredited and offered at entry level and level 1 to 3. Subjects include word and text processing, spreadsheets, database, desktop publishing and internet web page design. A basic computer literacy course leading to nationally recognised qualifications is also offered. MATREC provides courses at two outreach centres as well as on the main site. Courses last for two hours each week for 10 weeks. Day and evening courses are offered. There is no weekend provision. MATREC aims to bring ICT training to local residents, particularly those who are unemployed, unwaged, on low incomes or who are lone parents.

Foundation programmes

4. Thirty-nine learners are taking part in literacy and numeracy programmes. Thirty-four learners attend the main programme, which is for level 1 and 2 adult literacy and numeracy national tests. Learners attend a three-hour initial assessment, a nine-hour taster and up to 30 hours training to prepare them for the tests. One session has been operating during the day since February 2003. A further three late-afternoon sessions have been added since February 2004. Programmes are offered as two-hour sessions. As MATREC is an approved national testing centre for adult literacy and numeracy, learners can take the tests at their main site. Five learners attend a non-accredited programme to develop literacy skills alongside basic information technology (IT) skills. This is the second block of two 10-week pilot courses, provided for two hours each week.

5. MATREC provides OCN entry level computing course for 16 learners. This training is part of a wider programme delivered by one of MATREC's partners that works exclusively with people with learning difficulties and disabilities. MATREC manages and delivers the ICT element of this programme.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	36
Number of learner interviews	102
Number of staff interviews	40
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of partner/external agency interviews	4

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. MATREC's leadership and management are satisfactory, as is its approach to equality of opportunity. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. The quality of provision in business administration, management and professional, and in ICT is good. Foundation training, however, is unsatisfactory. Although literacy and numeracy are good, the delivery of community learning is very weak.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Business administration, management & professional		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		
- Adult and community learning	106	2

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT		
- Adult and community learning	584	2

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy		
- Adult and community learning	39	2
Numeracy		
- Adult and community learning	39	2
Community learning		
- Adult and community learning	16	5

KEY FINDINGS
Achievement and standards

7. **Retention in business administration, management and professional is good.** In 2002-03, 89 per cent of learners remained on course. For courses completed in 2003-04, retention ranges between 86 and 100 per cent.

8. **Achievement on teacher training courses is good.** Eighty per cent of learners achieved a national qualification in 2003. Portfolios show a good standard of work.

9. **Retention and achievement on ICT courses is good, and improving.** For 2003-04, on most courses retention is above 87 per cent, and achievement is above 85 per cent. Learners demonstrate a good range of skills in class, including the production of spreadsheets, and the effective use of clipart and colour in layout design.

10. **Standards in literacy and numeracy are good and achievement is satisfactory.** Most learners entered for the national tests are successful. **On the ICT and literacy course, learners show confidence in experimenting with words while at the same time developing word-processing skills.**

11. **In community learning, attainment is poor.** Six months after the start of the course, learners are not confident enough to experiment with the computer, do not recognise the software they are working with, and are unable to work on their own.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	6
Information & communications technology	0	2	11	5	0	0	0	18
Foundation programmes	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	5
Total	**0**	**3**	**18**	**6**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**29**

12. **Teaching and learning are good in business administration, management and professional courses, ICT, literacy and numeracy.** Seventy-one per cent of lessons seen during the inspection were good or better. Sessions are well planned and tutors make good use of resources such as electronic whiteboards and the internet to support learning. **Good-quality learning materials are used particularly effectively in ICT.** Workbooks refer to local issues, and exercises challenge learners to work to a high standard.

13. **Standards of teaching and learning are poor in community learning.** The workbooks are too difficult for the learners to understand. Learners do not spend sufficient time in class actively learning. **Initial assessments are inadequate.** Very little information is recorded on the initial assessment form. Training aims and options are the same for all learners. Learners' additional support needs are not recorded. **Specialist equipment and resources are not made available to learners. The support and monitoring arrangements for community learning ICT learners are inadequate.**

14. **Support for learners is very effective in business administration, ICT, and literacy and numeracy.** Staff follow up absences promptly and help learners to overcome any barriers to attendance. Learners have good support from tutors and volunteers who have themselves been learners at MATREC. They understand the challenges faced by learners and act as positive role models. **Induction materials for learners in literacy are inappropriate.**

15. **Although standards of teaching and learning are good in ICT, learners do not have sufficient opportunities to study web-based subjects. Some accommodation in this area is inappropriate. One training centre is too small and has non-adjustable seating. One room is uncomfortably hot.**

Leadership and management

16. **Partnership arrangements are particularly good** and contribute to very effective external communications and networking. MATREC takes a lead role in relevant partnerships which work co-operatively to share expertise, take part in joint projects and provide complementary programmes to help learners' progress. For example, MATREC chairs the local forum of providers to identify training needs, avoid duplication and build progression opportunities for learners.

17. **MATREC has introduced good initiatives to build skills and raise aspirations in the local community,** reflecting its mission to support local regeneration. Previous MATREC learners are active in a range of local regeneration projects. A well-established mentoring programme enables learners to work-shadow current teaching staff and progress to volunteering or teacher training. Local groups inexperienced in education and training are given support. For example, MATREC has recruited over 100 local people to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy and become 'learning champions'.

18. **The senior management team have extensive responsibilities but are not sufficiently involved in strategic and operational planning, or curriculum review.** Senior managers are not set targets in line with company aims and do not receive sufficient training for their management roles.

19. MATREC responds well to local initiatives for literacy and numeracy and has begun to pilot the integration of literacy and numeracy into existing curriculum areas. However, MATREC has not identified the resources, expertise, training, milestones and timescales for this new approach, as part of a costed, strategic plan.

20. **MATREC provides particularly good support for the many women who attend its courses.** It is sensitive to the needs of the high number of unemployed people in the local community, and to those with caring and parenting responsibilities. Many of the mostly female staff are former learners and provide strong role models for current learners. Courses and crèche facilities are free, and classes are arranged to accommodate the school day for those learners with children.

21. **The organisation has a good range of procedures for gathering learner feedback,** including the use of questionnaires and a suggestion box, learner representation on the management committee, and consultation through a new learner council. Staff respond promptly to the feedback, offering learners the chance to sample new subjects and progress to college courses in topics such as aromatherapy and massage. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. All staff were invited to contribute to the assessment. Inspectors' findings matched some of the strengths in the reports, but then found some additional weaknesses.

22. **Data is not analysed to monitor equality of opportunity, identify trends, compare the performance of different groups, or set targets for improvement.** Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently to ensure that materials used and teaching strategies reflect and develop best practice.

23. **Quality assurance procedures are not developed sufficiently.** There is no overall quality assurance policy and insufficient written guidance about key elements of quality assurance, such as the collection of learner feedback, or how they interact. Statistical data is not routinely analysed to support quality improvements. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory.

24. **Lesson observations are not used adequately to improve the quality of training.** Although the system is well established, and staff have received some training in carrying out observations, feedback to staff does not emphasise the quality of learning enough, and does not systematically identify actions to improve the quality of teaching.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- productive partnership arrangements
- good initiatives to build local skills and raise aspirations
- particularly good support for women returning to learning
- good range of procedures for gathering learner feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of the senior management team in planning
- weak use of data to monitor equality of opportunity
- insufficient development of quality assurance procedures
- inadequate use of lesson observations to improve quality of training

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Strengths

- good retention of learners
- good achievements on teacher training courses
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum review process

Information & communications technology

Using IT

Strengths

- good and improving retention and achievement
- good standards of teaching and learning
- effective use of good-quality learning materials
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- some inappropriate accommodation
- insufficient opportunities to study web-based subjects

Foundation programmes

Literacy

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective integration of literacy and ICT skills
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- inappropriate induction material for learners with literacy needs

Numeracy

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- inappropriate induction material for learners with numeracy needs

Community learning

Strengths

- no key strengths

Weaknesses

- poor attainment by learners
- poor standards of teaching and learning
- inadequate initial assessments
- no use of specialist equipment or resources
- inadequate programme monitoring and support

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MANOR TRAINING & RESOURCE CENTRE LIMITED:

- working at your own pace
- flexible joining dates
- skills learnt here are very useful at home and in the community
- appropriate and interesting assignments
- getting a certificate at the end of 10 weeks
- free courses and materials
- free crèche
- clean, friendly environment
- friendly, approachable teachers who offer excellent support
- many of the teachers have studied here
- problems are dealt with quickly

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MANOR TRAINING & RESOURCE CENTRE LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of paperwork at induction
- avoiding mixed-level groups
- accessibility - a lift is needed

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MANOR TRAINING & RESOURCE CENTRE LIMITED:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in community learning provision
- develop a comprehensive and well-documented system for quality assurance
- ensure that the lesson observation system leads to improvement in the quality of teaching and learning
- increase the management team's involvement in planning and decision-making
- establish more systematic procedures to monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy

Language of the Adult and Community Learning Sector

Terminology varies across the range of education and training settings covered by the *Common Inspection Framework.*   The table below indicates the terms appropriate to Adult and Community Learning

Single term used in the framework	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning	
Provider	Provider	Any organisation providing opportunities for adults to meet personal or collective goals through the experience of learning. Providers include local authorities, specialist designated institutions, voluntary and community sector organisations, regeneration partnerships and further education colleges
Learner	Learner	Includes those learning by participating in community projects, as well as those on courses. Learning, however, will be planned, with intended outcomes.
Teacher / trainer	Tutor	Person teaching adult learners or guiding or facilitating their learning.
	Mentor	Person providing individual, additional support, guidance and advice to learners to help them achieve their learning goals.
Learning goals	Main learning goals	Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, e.g. in the family, community, or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.
	Secondary learning goals	These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.
Personal and learning skills	Personal and learning skills	These include being able to study independently, willingness to collaborate with others, and readiness to take up another opportunity for education or training.

Other terms used in Adult and Community Learning

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Unanticipated, or unintended learning outcome	Adults often experience unanticipated gains as a result of being involved in learning. These include improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence and a growing sense of belonging to a community. Gains of this kind should be acknowledged and recorded in any record of achievement.
Subject-based programme	A programme organised around a body of knowledge, e.g. the structure and usage of the French language or ceramic glazing techniques. Students could be expected to progress from one aspect of the subject to another, to grasp increasingly complex concepts or analyses or to develop greater levels of skill or to apply skills to a new area of work.
Issue-based programme	A programme that is based on the concerns, interests and aspirations of particular groups, for example members of a Sikh Gurdwara wanting to address inter-faith relations in their town, or parents worried about the incidence of drug abuse in their locality. Issue-based learning tends to be associated with geographically defined communities, but the increasing use of electronic means of communication means that this need no longer be the case. Progress is defined in terms of the group's increasing ability to analyse its situation, to access new information and skills which will help it resolve its difficulties and generate solutions and its growing confidence in dealing with others to implement those solutions.
Outreach provision	Provision established in a community setting in addition to provision made at an organisation's main site(s). Outreach programmes may be similar to courses at the main site(s) or be designed to meet the specific requirements of that community.
Neighbourhood-based work	The provider's staff have a long-term presence in a local community with a specific remit to understand the concerns of the local residents and develop learning activities to meet local needs and interests.
Community regeneration	The process of improving the quality of life in communities by investing in their infrastructure and facilities, creating opportunities for training and employment and tackling poor health and educational under-achievement. Community regeneration requires the active participation of local residents in decision-making. Changes and improvements are often achieved either directly or indirectly as a result of the adult learning activities which arise from this.

	Relating the term to Adult and Community Learning
Community capacity building	The process of enabling local people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to take advantage of opportunities for employment, training and further education and to become selfmanaging, sustainable communities.
Active citizenship	The process whereby people recognise the power they have to improve the quality of life for others and make a conscious effort to do so: the process whereby people recognise the power of organisations and institutions to act in the interests of the common good and exercise their influence to ensure that they do so. Adult learning contributes to active citizenship.

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT   Grade 3

Strengths

- productive partnership arrangements
- good initiatives to build local skills and raise aspirations
- particularly good support for women returning to learning
- good range of procedures for gathering learner feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of the senior management team in planning
- weak use of data to monitor equality of opportunity
- insufficient development of quality assurance procedures
- inadequate use of lesson observations to improve quality of training

25. MATREC takes a lead role in relevant local partnerships. External communications and networking are particularly good. MATREC chairs the local forum where partners work in co-operation to identify who is best placed to offer certain types of training and at which times and venues, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication. Partners take part in joint initiatives and in complementary activities in order to raise aspirations for learning in the local community. MATREC and its partners are well informed about each other's work and where expertise lies within the partnership. Provision is arranged locally to enable learners to progress from basic programmes with one provider to more advanced qualifications with another.

26. MATREC's initiatives to build local skills and aspirations are good, and support the organisation's mission to promote local regeneration. MATREC provides good opportunities for learners to progress to teaching roles. A well-established mentoring programme enables learners to work-shadow current teaching staff and learners are encouraged to progress to volunteering and teacher training. Almost all teaching staff have been learners at MATREC and provide good role models of achievement for new learners. Previous learners are active in a range of local regeneration projects. In some instances, they have set up their own social enterprises, with support from MATREC, to provide training or mentoring to a wider range of community groups. Local groups that show an interest in developing learning or training, but which have little previous experience, are given formal and informal support. MATREC is training local people to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy and to become 'learning champions'; so far, it has recruited over a hundred learners.

27. The board of trustees meets its responsibilities satisfactorily. It meets monthly as a

management committee, on behalf of the local community. Senior managers also attend this meeting. The committee plays an active role, providing good support to the co-ordinator of MATREC, as well as providing labour market intelligence, specific types of expertise, and links to the community and employers. It writes the annual report, and sets the strategic direction in line with the mission for local regeneration. A detailed and costed business plan has been produced for 2003-06, focusing on the development of the premises, although not on other aspects of the business. A three-year development plan has been produced by the co-ordinator, in negotiation with the management committee. The plan takes into account regional surveys of employers' needs.

28. Financial management is satisfactory. Spending is closely controlled. Two-year projections, as well as regular financial updates, are presented to the management committee. MATREC has good strategies for bidding for additional funding. Teaching resources are satisfactory overall. However, several programmes based at a community centre have been suspended because of poor accommodation.

29. Internal communications are satisfactory. Staff understand MATREC's actions and objectives; they were involved effectively in the development of a new range of employment policies and procedures. A good employee handbook of employment policies and procedures has been introduced. The management team meets on a weekly basis. Departmental teams and general staff meetings are also held on a weekly basis. Meetings are used to keep staff up to date for routine operational matters. Departmental meetings also discuss individual learners. Notes are kept of meetings, but these do not clearly identify actions designated to staff and are not forwarded to the management committee.

30. The staff appraisal process is well designed, and staff find it useful and supportive. Training needs are identified for individuals through appraisals, these are then used to produce a training programme. However, appraisals are not used effectively to monitor staff performance.

31. The senior management team consists of a co-ordinator, assisted by three managers for administration, ICT and finance. These three managers have responsibilities for related curriculum areas, but management responsibility for many areas of learning such as health, construction, literacy, numeracy and language and outreach teaching, lie with the co-ordinator. Managers have received little management training and the role of the team is not fully developed. The team is not sufficiently involved in strategic and operational planning or curriculum review. The business plan and the three-year development plan make little reference to current provision and do not set targets to expand, maintain or reduce current programmes. MATREC does not have an operational plan to support the implementation of strategic aims, such as the introduction of 'bite-sized' learning and promoting learning for people with disabilities.

32. Although MATREC updates its existing programmes in line with awarding body requirements and changes in software, few changes have been made to the range of programmes offered by departmental teams. The three-year development plan commits the organisation to a wider range of occupational areas and to higher level programmes.

The implications of these changes for recruitment, marketing, quality assurance and management have not been considered in any depth by the management team, even though some programmes have already been advertised. Senior managers are not set specific and measurable targets in line with organisational and departmental planning, such as for improving rates of learner recruitment, retention and achievement. They, in turn, do not set such targets for departmental staff in order to help with effective monitoring of staff performance.

33. The management information system is not fit for purpose and does not support managers in monitoring and evaluating performance or in planning provision. Managers have not received training in using the management information system or in how to make effective use of data in decision-making and planning. Data and other management information provided to the management committee are not adequate to help the committee check MATREC's quality of provision. Although managers have a good understanding of the needs of current learners and the local community, they have little experience of wider educational contexts and few opportunities to share experiences with managers of education outside MATREC.

34. MATREC does not have a formal strategy for developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. The organisation responds well to local initiatives for literacy and numeracy, such as taking part in pilots on family learning, providing premises for a resource centre for the local area, and capacity building. Partners provide some complementary programmes in literacy and numeracy. The three-year development plan identifies programmes to extend literacy and numeracy programmes locally, but these were not based on sound market research of the target groups and did not successfully recruit learners.

35. Initial assessment of learners' needs is based on informal assessment by staff, but there are no formal guidelines. Most staff have had basic training in literacy awareness, but only one member of staff is trained to offer literacy and numeracy support, although a second is being trained. Some learners are referred to trained staff for an assessment of their needs, and are referred to support at MATREC or with partner organisations, depending on the level of need. There are no formal arrangements to provide specialist assessments for learners with specific difficulties. MATREC is beginning to pilot the integration of literacy and numeracy into existing curriculum areas, with some success in ICT. However, the resources, expertise, training, milestones and timescales for this new approach have not yet been identified as part of a costed, strategic plan.

Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade 3

36. MATREC provides particularly good support for the many women who attend its courses. Unemployment rates are high in the local community, and many people are unable to seek employment because of caring responsibilities. Staff have a good awareness of local circumstances and needs. Many live in the area and 81 per cent are former learners. Staff are regarded as strong role models for current learners, because many of them have direct personal experience of the challenges faced by full-time parents and carers with few previous educational achievements. Courses are open to

everybody, but currently most of MATREC's learners and staff are women. The provider has an arrangement with a local childcare provider to run a crèche. The childcare centre is a provider in its own right, and MATREC's learners using the crèche facilities are made aware of learning opportunities there. Courses are scheduled to fit in with school timetables to allow parents to attend and other flexible arrangements are available. Many women are retained on programmes and subsequently achieve qualifications and employment.

37. Most courses are provided in the daytime, with a limited provision in the evenings and at weekends. MATREC has good links with local schools and offers work experience to young people on a regular basis. Some courses have been offered to specific disadvantaged and under-represented groups, for example, young men and asylum seekers. MATREC makes reasonable adjustments for its learners and is sensitive to people's needs. Current learners represent a wide range of age groups. MATREC is currently training some people from under-represented groups as tutors. These include men and people from minority ethnic groups.

38. Equality of opportunity policies and procedures are satisfactory. The policy is distributed to all staff and learners. Documents are regularly updated and a consultant has been employed to ensure that they are comprehensive. However, reference to current legislation is incomplete and difficult for users to locate.

39. MATREC has a satisfactory grievance and complaints procedure. To date, this has not been used because problems are dealt with as they arise.

40. All staff have received some general training in equality and diversity. Staff are sensitive to the needs of their learner group and encourage learners to respect each other and to celebrate diversity. A member of staff is currently integrating literacy and numeracy teaching with the ICT provision, with a view to applying this to other programme areas at a later stage.

41. Premises have recently been adapted to accommodate people with mobility problems and a stair lift has been installed. Rooms have been painted in contrasting colours to highlight doors and windows. Computers in the main centre have screen filters, tables are accessible and chairs are adjustable. A room has been set aside as a prayer room and classes have been timetabled sensitively to fit in with the needs of learners. However, some specific aspects of equality of opportunity are not considered sufficiently. For example, some teaching materials for learners have not been designed to take account of visual impairment or literacy needs. Signs and notices are often in capitals, but sometimes in small print. Publicity materials aimed at learners and prospective learners are available in written format only. Large-print documents can be provided.

42. The monitoring of equality of opportunity is weak. Staff are aware of the distribution of under-represented groups in the local area and know that men are under-represented. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is high, at 12 per cent, compared with a 3 per cent representation within the local community. MATREC is aware that

people with disabilities are often hard to reach and engage in learning, but there has been no targeting, and no planning of learning programmes to ensure that they meet the needs of these learners. Data is not analysed to identify trends, to compare the performance of one group against another, or to set targets to boost recruitment and retention of under-represented groups. All leavers are asked to complete an exit survey, but this information is not collated and analysed to enhance support arrangements for learners who may be at risk of leaving programmes. The provision is not monitored to ensure that materials used in classes are inclusive and reflect good practice with regard to equality of opportunity and diversity. Publicity is not specifically aimed at under-represented groups, and no research is carried out to identify how to attract new learners.

Quality assurance   Contributory grade 4

43. MATREC has a good range of procedures for gathering learner feedback from directly delivered and subcontracted provision. Learners contribute their views through course-specific and more general questionnaires, through the learner representatives who sit on the management committee, and through 'suggestion boxes'. Staff have taken action to resolve issues raised by learners, such as overheated teaching areas and inadequate workspaces. A network of local providers, including MATREC, has set up a learner council to offer further opportunities for learners to express their views. This has proved very effective. One hundred learners have joined the council.

44. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. All staff were invited to contribute to the assessment and to comment on the draft report. Approximately 50 per cent of the staff took an active part. Inspectors' findings matched some of the strengths in the report, but they found some additional weaknesses. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. The organisation holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The organisation has met nationally recognised quality standards for improving quality though training and development.

45. Many of the quality assurance procedures are not developed sufficiently. They are poorly documented, and some aspects are unclear to staff. MATREC has no overall quality assurance policy, and insufficient written guidance about key elements of quality assurance procedures, such as gathering learner feedback, or how the procedures link. Staff are unclear about who is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the outcomes of lesson observations. Contracts and service level agreements do not specify how quality of provision will be monitored, although staff routinely monitor the extent to which their partner providers are meeting enrolment targets. Statistical data are not routinely used, or analysed, to support quality improvements. The co-ordinator reviews achievement, but the outcomes are not shared with other managers and are not part of a formal review system. Staff are not confident in the use of the management information system, or about the reliability of the data.

46. Feedback on observations does not systematically identify development points or set targets to improve the teaching. The feedback forms do not place sufficient emphasis on the quality of learning. Improvement of the good provision at MATREC is

not assured, but more significantly, the quality assurance procedures did not identify the poor provision in community learning. However, the lesson observation system is well established and most staff have been observed. MATREC has employed additional staff to carry out lesson observations, has offered other staff the opportunity to participate as observers and has provided some training.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		
- Adult and community learning	106	2

Business administration

Strengths

- good retention of learners
- good achievements on teacher training courses
- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum review process

Achievement and standards

47. The retention of learners is good. In the year 2002-03, a total of 173 learners enrolled in the area of learning. Eighty-nine per cent were retained to complete the target qualification. For the year 2003-04, 88 per cent of learners have been retained. Two payroll courses already completed during this period retained 97 and 86 per cent of learners. On an introductory book-keeping and level 2 book-keeping diploma course, all learners were retained.

48. Achievement rates on teacher training courses are good. Eighty per cent of learners successfully achieved a nationally recognized qualification in the year 2003. Twelve learners have recently completed an OCN volunteer tutor training award. Portfolios completed by learners on teacher training programmes show good achievement levels.

49. Achievements on business and office skills programmes are satisfactory. In the year 2002-03, overall achievements reached 55 per cent. Forty-four per cent of learners enrolled in this year are still on programme. In the current year, the achievements have reached 50 per cent at the time of inspection, with 36 per cent of learners still on programme. All learners achieved their targets on a completed text processing course, and 83 per cent on a completed payroll course.

50. The standard of work produced by learners on introductory and level 1 courses is satisfactory. Learners are able to perform appropriate tasks linked to the skills being

developed. On a payroll course, for example, learners demonstrated competence in completing worksheets using realistic workplace data.

Quality of education and training

51. Standards of teaching and learning are good. Schemes of work are developed for each qualification and individual session plans are prepared with clear aims and planned outcomes. Tutors ensure that learners understand these aims and outcomes. They carefully plan the use of resources to support learning. Learners have good access to computer workstations with appropriate commercial software. Tutors display good subject knowledge and involve learners in activities which promote learning and maintain interest and motivation. Tutors are sensitive to learners' needs and learners feel able to ask questions and ask for additional support in learning sessions.

52. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Classrooms are furnished and there are appropriate teaching aids, including whiteboards and overhead projectors. Learners have access to appropriate keyboarding and computer equipment. In book-keeping sessions, handouts and worksheets prepared by staff, are of a good standard and support the development of knowledge and practical skills. Learners also have access to textbooks, calculators and audio tapes. On teacher training programmes, materials issued to learners have been carefully prepared and reflect current practice and legislation in areas such as equal opportunities, and health and safety. On the volunteer tutor training course, learners have the choice of completing required workbooks either manually or on disk.

53. Assessment strategies used by staff are satisfactory. An appropriate range of assessment methods is used to assess learning and to inform learners of their progress. Learners' progress is well monitored and recorded. Tutors mark work accurately and provide constructive, written feedback to encourage learners and help them improve.

54. The range of programmes is appropriate in developing knowledge and skills for employment in administration. Learners progress into employment in finance and computer departments in the local community. The curriculum offered includes opportunities for progression from introductory level to level 2 programmes in, for example, accounting and office skills. Many learners return to MATREC to broaden their knowledge and skills of business and office work at both introductory and more advanced levels.

55. Support for learners is effective in maintaining their interest and regular attendance. Tutors contact learners who do not attend regularly and make flexible arrangements to take account of personal or health problems. Some learners have been allowed to extend their training periods. Tutors adjust their teaching styles to meet individual learning needs. Effective use is made of volunteers to support learners in the classroom. Many of these volunteers have themselves been learners with MATREC. They are positive role models and are able to share experiences with current learners. Learners who complete their training and progress to employment are encouraged to maintain

contact with the organisation for advice and guidance on issues arising in the workplace. For example, a former learner contacted a tutor for advice on a commercial software package in use at work. Courses are delivered at times convenient to those with family responsibilities. Access to a crèche is an important support feature for learners.

Leadership and management

56. Operational management is effective. There is a strong focus on the needs of learners. Most training staff have themselves been learners and draw on this experience to relate to current learners. MATREC offers appropriate staff development to maintain the currency of staff knowledge and skills; this includes achieving teacher training qualifications and developing lip-reading skills to support learners with hearing difficulties. Much of the communication between staff is informal and is not recorded. There is no literacy and numeracy strategy for this area of learning; some training is planned to help tutors identify and support learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

57. Internal moderation is satisfactory and consistent with OCN guidance. Moderation is carried out throughout the duration of programmes and includes written feedback to staff.

58. The self-assessment report identified two of the key strengths identified by inspectors. A number of the other strengths in the self-assessment report were judged by inspectors to be normal practice. The self-assessment report did not identify the key weakness found by inspectors. Staff understand the self-assessment process and contributed to the preparation of the report.

59. The curriculum review process is poor. MATREC has no formal review of provision to evaluate marketing strategies, teaching styles or the suitability of assessment methods. Regular staff meetings focus on day-to-day operational matters, such as attendance and the enrolment of new learners. There is no forum to share good practice. The views of learners are collected, but it is not clear how this data is used to improve provision. No targets are set for the improvement of quality in the curriculum.

Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Adult and community learning	584	2

Using IT

Strengths

- good and improving retention and achievement
- good standards of teaching and learning
- effective use of good-quality learning materials
- very good support for learners

Weaknesses

- some inappropriate accommodation
- insufficient opportunities to study web-based subjects

Achievement and standards

60. Achievement and retention are good and improving. Currently, the number of learners gaining accreditation is high, with all learners on many courses achieving pass rates. The 10-week introductory course is particularly popular with local residents, 97 per cent of whom gain OCN qualifications at either entry level or level 1. A significant number of learners progress from the introductory course and make very good progress, gaining accreditation within 10 weeks. Learners achieve a good standard of work. They quickly gain confidence in the use of the hardware and software and are keen to learn and progress. The quality of desktop publishing shows good manipulation skills and the general standard of ICT exercises is good. Letters and posters show good layout, colour combination and effective use of clipart. Learners enjoy sharing their skills and support their peers well. They are keen to gain accreditation and build their files effectively ready for assessment.

61. Some learners develop poor keyboarding skills which are not corrected by the tutors. For example, some learners do not use document holders. They hold the exercise sheet in their hands, leaving only one hand free to use the keyboard. In one of the outreach centres there was is not enough space between computers for exercise books, so learners have to hold these in their hands. Tutors do not always correct learners' poor posture.

Quality of education and training

62. Standards of teaching and learning are good. All the teaching observed by inspectors was satisfactory or better, with 72 per cent good or better. Schemes of work are well designed and include challenging tasks. Sessions are well planned and valued by learners. Lesson plans are shared by the tutors and reviewed periodically. Tutors use various techniques to maintain learners' interest, including data projection and interactive whiteboards. Learners are encouraged to extend their skill levels beyond the course specifications. They receive effective guidance from the tutors, who are enthusiastic about their subjects. Learners respond to the interest shown in them and make good progress. However, in a very small number of cases, when the class is full and learners' ability levels vary widely, the tutors cannot give sufficient time to support each learner, who must wait for attention.

63. Good-quality workbooks assessment materials and exercises are used effectively. Exercises are used productively to develop learners' skills and reinforce learning. Thorough and precise assessments, with guidance, stretch learners and encourage them to work to a very good standard. Tutors use topical and relevant examples and tips to reinforce learning. The more able learners extend assignments and add to their learning. Workbooks have references to local issues and examples to capture learners' interest. Additional handouts offer study notes and exercises. Tutors use oral questioning skilfully to check learners' understanding. Technical terms are clearly explained, reinforced through handouts and used as practise in technical discussions. All the learning materials are provided free of charge.

64. Learners are given very good support. Knowledgeable and committed tutors offer effective guidance. Many of the tutors have been learners with MATREC and are products of its internal teaching and coaching schemes. Learners respond to the interest shown and make good progress. Tutors introduce learning in small, discrete steps, which helps learners to gain confidence and develop skills. Tutors support learners well through progress reviews at the end of each session and in tutorials at the end of each 10-week course. However, target-setting is not fully effective.

65. Assessment practices are satisfactory and meet awarding body requirements. Marked work contains helpful comments for learners to improve their performances and their attainments are carefully recorded. Learners are made fully aware of assessment requirements and know what is required to achieve their target grades. Support for learner's literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory.

66. Some accommodation is inappropriate. Although the training centres are welcoming and flexible, one centre is too small and has non-adjustable seating. There are no foot and wrist rests and few motivational posters in the rooms. Rooms are equipped with good-quality, modern workstations, connected to a stable network. Two rooms have fixed data projectors, and an interactive whiteboard. However, one room is uncomfortably hot. All teaching staff are appropriately qualified to teach sessions involving office software; most are trained as teachers or in the final stages of completing the course. The computer technician provides effective support.

67. Courses are office-based and do not provide enough opportunities to study web-based subjects in depth. For example, there are no e-mail, or photoshop elements, and no networking or computer maintenance courses. Web page design is offered, but interest shown by learners is very low.

Leadership and management

68. ICT programmes are well planned. Learners are made aware of the requirements for successfully completing the training programme and for achieving their qualifications. Teaching resources are well managed. There is a strong focus on the needs of the learners. Most staff have been learners themselves and draw upon this experience to improve the learners' experiences. Regular staff appraisals are carried out, during which training and development needs are identified. Tutors meet formally every week, but do not spend enough time discussing teaching and learning strategies. Session observations have been carried out, but these are not thorough enough and do not produce action plans to improve performance.

69. All learners are treated fairly and equally. However, learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is not reinforced or assessed through teaching or the workbooks.

70. ICT learners are represented on the training centre's management committee and suggestions for improvement are usually acted upon quickly by the committee.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy		
- Adult and community learning	39	2
Numeracy		
- Adult and community learning	39	2
Community learning		
- Adult and community learning	16	5

Literacy

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- very effective integration of literacy and ICT skills
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- inappropriate induction material for learners with literacy needs

Numeracy

Strengths

- good standards of teaching and learning
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- inappropriate induction material for learners with numeracy needs

Community learning

Strengths

- no key strengths

Weaknesses

- poor attainment by learners
- poor standards of teaching and learning
- inadequate initial assessments
- no use of specialist equipment or resources
- inadequate programme monitoring and support

Achievement and standards

71. Standards in literacy and numeracy are good and achievements are satisfactory. All learners attend sessions to achieve qualifications which allow them to progress to other training or employment. The initial assessment process ensures that those unlikely to succeed within the 30-hour duration of the courses are referred on to more suitable provisions. All the remaining learners are retained and only one learner has not achieved a pass, of the 22 who have taken the national tests. Some of the learners are ready within two weeks to successfully complete their tests. The programme combining literacy and ICT skills is non-accredited, but learners complete exercises to a level which reflects their satisfactory development of literacy and ICT skills. Learners demonstrate the confidence to experiment with words and what can be achieved using a word-processing package.

72. Attainment is poor on the community learning course teaching ICT to adults with learning difficulties. Although all learners have remained on the course, after six months they do not have the confidence to experiment with the computer and try out new skills. They are not confident enough to work by themselves, and if the tutor is not sitting with them they prefer to wait until guidance can be given. Most learners cannot talk about the work they have produced for their file and do not recognise the software they have used.

Quality of education and training

73. Standards of teaching and learning on literacy and numeracy courses is good. Schemes of work are well designed and teaching is well planned to meet the needs of the learners. They work independently, with tutor support, but group sessions are also planned for some parts of the core curriculum. Learners can choose to work on the computer or do paper and pen exercises. Tutors use the internet very effectively to engage learners with a variety of exercises, puzzles and games. Tutors also use a range of software to provide additional exercises. Learners follow well-designed workbooks and get regular and prompt feedback about their work. Learners are actively engaged in

the sessions and show delight and pride as they learn and share their achievements. Tutors are readily available to give support; they explain concepts very clearly and constantly check learners' understanding. Learners are fully informed of the testing procedures and take practise tests to prepare for them. They work at their own pace and are entered for their tests as soon as they are ready.

74. Literacy and ICT skills are integrated effectively. MATREC offers an extremely well-designed programme to help those learners in difficulties with ICT programmes because of their literacy problems. This ensures the effective development of literacy skills, at the same time developing ICT skills. Tutors use a combination of exercises based on individual computer work and group sessions. Learners clearly find the sessions very enjoyable.

75. Support for learners is particularly good. Tutors show a thorough knowledge and understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses and support them accordingly. Any absences are followed up and tutors help learners to overcome problems which interfere with their attendance. Sessions are arranged to accommodate learners' personal schedules. Learners value the extremely welcoming and friendly environment at MATREC and cite this as an important reason for their continued attendance.

76. MATREC has sufficient resources for learners, including access to computers and up-to-date software. All learners have an initial assessment, which is used for their individual learning plan and to indicate the level at which they take their first test. Tutors keep satisfactory records of learners' work and progress, towards readiness for the national tests. Their progress is reviewed, although some aspects are informal and not recorded.

77. Learners in community learning complete exercises that meet the evidence requirements for the OCN entry level qualification. These are all signed and dated by learners. A log is also kept of their activities in each learning session. This is recorded by the trainer and also by the learner, if they are able to write. Work and completed exercises are kept in their own files.

78. Since the beginning of their programmes, MATREC has carried out internal verifications of a sample of files. Records of this show that assessment practice is satisfactory.

79. Induction materials for literacy and numeracy learners are inappropriate. The induction booklet is printed in a dense text, in different fonts and is not easy for the learner to understand. There are no graphics and some of the content, including reference to the equal opportunities policy, is poorly expressed. The language is too demanding for those who have literacy needs.

80. Standards of teaching and learning on the community learning course are very weak. Learners are given a workbook that they are unable to use on their own. Some learners are able to read the instructions, but show little, if any, understanding of the content. They have to wait for the tutor to sit with them and go through the workbook. As soon as the trainer moves away they are unable to continue independently. Learners

spend most of the session sitting and waiting. The tutors mainly point and tell the learners what to do, they do not usually check learners' understanding of instructions and they use terminology that these learners find difficult to understand. Learners are expected to go straight into the workbook exercises without any preliminary practise in skills such as using a mouse, experimenting with and using the different icons, and using text boxes. Learners are unable to describe what they are doing when the tutor leaves them.

81. Initial assessments are inadequate. The learners have expressed an interest in computers before starting this programme and they have had the opportunity for a taster session. The staff then decide who should be put forward for the programme. An initial assessment form records previous experience and qualifications and there is usually nothing, or very little information recorded. Other parts of the form are to record training aims, progression routes and other training options. These are completed in the same way for all learners. There is no record of the assessment of literacy or numeracy abilities, of additional support needs arising from learners' disabilities or learning difficulties, or other relevant information such as access to a computer at home.

82. Specialist equipment or resources are not used in the programmes. At least two of the learners observed had co-ordination problems and weak grip and struggled to use the standard mouse supplied. Wide tables are provided to accommodate wheelchairs, but there is no other specially adapted equipment or furniture. Document holders are available, but learners are not encouraged to use them. They are reminded about the best way to sit at the computer. Tutors do not make use of the free resources, which have been developed for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities to help develop understanding or to make the learning process more fun and enjoyable.

Leadership and management

83. The size of literacy and numeracy classes is well managed and an extra sessional tutor has been provided for the larger group in the late afternoon sessions. The basic skills development officer works with other tutors to advise and support them in integrating literacy and numeracy skills with other programmes.

84. The support and monitoring arrangements for the community learning ICT course are inadequate. MATREC advised the partner responsible for the overall programme about planning and resourcing the ICT element, but further support is only offered in response to specific requests. MATREC's staff have carried out monitoring visits and have observed staff teaching. These observations have been ineffective, however, in ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identified several of the strengths, but none of the weaknesses found by inspectors.