

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of provider: Manor Training and Resource Centre Limited
Date of visit: 9 July 2009

Context

Manor Training and Resource Centre (MaTReC) is a voluntary sector training organisation based in Sheffield. The South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contracts MaTReC to provide adult and community learning to approximately 500 learners each year.

MaTReC's provision has not significantly altered since its previous inspection. In 2008/09, 29% of the provision offered was in preparation for life and work and 20% in information and communication technology (ICT). MaTReC continues to offer provision in ICT; languages, literature and culture; education and training; literacy and numeracy; and business, administration and law. More recently, it has started to provide health, public services and care programmes. MaTReC recruits around 50% of its learners from Manor estate, the third most deprived area in Sheffield.

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in May 2008, when the overall effectiveness of provision, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, and leadership and management were satisfactory. The quality of provision and equality of opportunity were good. Provision in ICT and in literacy and numeracy were also good.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made to improve overall success rates?	Insufficient progress
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MaTReC has made insufficient progress in improving success rates on long courses. Success rates declined overall between 2006/07 and 2007/08. At entry level, success rates on long courses declined sharply from 59% to 40%. At level 1 they fell by five percentage points from 61% to 56% and at level 2 they fell by four percentage points, from 61% to 57%. Success rates for long courses are still well below national averages. A notice to improve has been in place for the last two years and currently covers most sector subject areas. While more learners were retained in 2007/08, a smaller proportion actually achieved their qualifications. Achievement declined at all levels but particularly at levels 1 and 2. In-year data for 2008/09 shows marked progress. Retention on long courses has improved significantly. However, achievement data is incomplete and it is too early to assess whether success rates have improved.

Most learners begin courses with low levels of previous attainment. Many of those who complete make good progress to higher levels of study. A small but growing number of learners are on short courses. In 2006/07, success rates on these courses were low at only 60% but they improved significantly in 2007/08 and are now satisfactory at 84%.

What progress has been made to improve retention on long courses?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made to improve retention on long courses. Overall retention on long courses has improved from 68% in 2007/08, to 81% in 2008/09. Retention on long courses at entry level improved significantly from 50% to 81%. At level 1 it improved from 68% to 80% and at level 2 from 76% to 82%. Retention on long courses has improved and is now satisfactory in languages at 81%, preparation for life and work at 80%, and business administration at 81%. Retention on long courses in health and social care, offered for the first time during 2008/09, is good at 88%. Retention on long courses in ICT fell slightly from 77% to 75% in 2008/09.

Attendance has improved since the introduction of the new register system. Tutors and managers monitor attendance thoroughly, and follow up absences promptly and sensitively to identify any problems. Unauthorised absence has declined. The 'in it to win it' scheme rewards learners who achieve 100% attendance. At-risk learners are identified early and supported well. MaTReC has employed a learners' support worker who supports learners with a wide range of personal issues. The proportion of learners receiving additional learning support has increased significantly and enables more learners to stay on programmes.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made to improve the planning and delivery of provision to improve learner outcomes?	Reasonable progress
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MaTReC has made reasonable progress in the planning and delivery of provision to improve learner outcomes. It has developed detailed procedures on recruitment and selection. Great care is taken to recruit learners on to the right course and level to enable them to succeed. Both initial and diagnostic assessments now take place before learners start their courses. The induction process has been reviewed to ensure that learners are suitably prepared to begin their courses. Learners' programmes are increasingly individualised, allowing attendance patterns that accommodate learners' personal circumstances. MaTReC now provides more first steps courses, enabling learners to gain confidence and basic skills before beginning their main courses. An increasing number of learners attend extra tuition and support sessions to build up their confidence, knowledge and skills effectively. A few learners achieve higher than expected qualifications, supporting their progress to higher level courses offered at the local college.

The acquisition of additional resources enables MaTReC to include information technology more effectively into the curriculum, particularly in business administration. The training is more relevant to commercial requirements and the workplace. The introduction of online assessment for literacy and numeracy courses helps learners to take tests at times convenient to them, re-sit them more frequently, and to achieve and progress more quickly to the next stage. MaTReC has yet to evaluate the effectiveness of the wide range of actions it has implemented to improve learner outcomes.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to improve the use and analysis of data?	Significant progress
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MaTReC has significantly improved the collection and use of data. The improved management information system meets tutors' and managers' needs well. They can easily obtain learner performance information using an accessible management information system. The staff responsible for this system have a very good understanding of funding arrangements and provide good information for decision making using well-presented data. Trend charts are easy to understand and are discussed regularly in staff meetings and meetings with trustees. Staff use data well to monitor trends in retention and success rates and to compare success rates across the provision and with national averages. MaTReC has developed an effective register system to accurately record and monitor learners' attendance and retention on different courses. Staff take very effective action to support those learners identified as at risk of leaving their courses too early or not achieving their qualification.

What progress has been made to improve quality improvement arrangements?	Insufficient progress
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MaTReC has made insufficient progress to improve its quality arrangements. A few aspects have improved, for example, benchmarks are used more effectively to assess learners' performance. The moderation of teaching and learning observation grades has effectively identified areas for improvement in the observation process, such as collecting learners' feedback. Joint observations now include a subject specialist. All tutors were observed during 2008/09. However, the observation of teaching and learning does not sufficiently focus on how teaching activities support learning or attainment. Observation records do not always reflect the grades awarded to teaching sessions, which are often higher than the evidence indicates. Quality procedures are insufficiently detailed and do not set clear criteria and standards for the main aspects of the learning process. MaTReC has not fully defined and implemented procedures for monitoring the quality of significant aspects of the learning process such as learners' individual learning plans or progress reviews.

How much progress has been made to develop safeguarding procedures?	Reasonable progress
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MaTRec has made reasonable progress in developing its safeguarding procedures, which meet current government requirements. MaTReC has policies and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults. One manager is the nominated person responsible for safeguarding matters. Staff who are in contact with learners have Criminal Records Bureau clearance. MaTReC has provided some staff awareness training on safeguarding and plans to provide further safeguarding training for all staff over the next year. A few displays in the centre encourage learners to express any concerns that they may have, but they do not particularly focus on safeguarding matters.

What progress has been made to improve the self-assessment process including the use of evidence?	Reasonable progress
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MaTRec has made reasonable progress in improving the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is now more inclusive. Staff and managers from each sector subject area assess the performance of the provision and provide evidence for their judgements. Plans are in place to engage learners in the preparation of 2008/09 self-assessment report. The self-assessment report was completed in December 2008. It is detailed, thorough and critical and uses data particularly well to evidence its judgements. MaTReC's development plan links closely to the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report and the previous inspection. The plan includes a range of actions with dates for their completion. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these actions.