

INSIGHT

How to Reduce Staff Turnover in Facilities Management



Introduction

High staff turnover is one of the most damaging and underestimated problems within Facilities Management. When experienced FM professionals leave, organisations often lose:

- operational knowledge
- leadership stability
- stakeholder trust
- team consistency
- and momentum

The financial cost alone can be significant — but the operational cost is often even greater. Repeated turnover can create:

- service inconsistency
- increased pressure on remaining teams
- recruitment fatigue
- reduced morale
- and loss of organisational confidence

Yet many organisations still approach retention reactively rather than strategically. This guide explores why turnover happens in Facilities Management, what strong organisations do differently, and how employers can create environments where high-performing FM professionals want to stay long-term.

Turnover Is Rarely Just About Salary

Salary matters. But many FM professionals leave roles because of:

- leadership quality
- workload pressure
- poor communication
- lack of support
- unclear expectations
- or operational instability

In many cases, resignation is simply the final stage of a much longer period of disengagement. Strong retention strategies begin with understanding that people rarely leave stable environments where they feel trusted, supported, respected, and able to perform effectively.

The best
recruitment
conversations
sound more
like insight
than sales



Leadership Quality Drives Retention

One of the strongest predictors of staff retention is leadership quality. Facilities Management is often a high-pressure environment involving:

- operational responsibility
- competing demands
- stakeholder pressure
- compliance risk
- and constant problem-solving

In unstable leadership environments, pressure compounds quickly. Strong FM leaders typically:

- communicate clearly
- create structure
- remain calm under pressure
- set realistic expectations
- and reduce unnecessary operational friction

Poor leadership often creates burnout, confusion, disengagement, and turnover. Many retention problems are leadership problems in disguise.

Workload Must Be Sustainable

Many FM professionals quietly absorb excessive operational pressure for long periods before leaving. This often happens gradually:

- teams shrink
- responsibilities expand
- expectations increase
- but support structures remain unchanged

Over time this creates exhaustion, frustration, and reduced engagement. Strong organisations regularly assess:

- workload distribution
- operational capacity
- escalation support
- and resource alignment

Retention improves significantly when people feel supported, realistic expectations exist, and pressure is managed sustainably.

—
The best
candidates are
rarely
looking
—



Communication Matters More Than Most Organisations Realise

Poor communication is one of the biggest causes of disengagement within FM environments. This includes:

- unclear priorities
- inconsistent leadership messaging
- lack of feedback
- reactive communication
- and poor operational visibility

Strong Facilities Management environments communicate:

- consistently
- calmly
- transparently
- and proactively

People are far more likely to remain within organisations where expectations are clear, information flows properly, and leadership remains visible.

Career Progression Must Feel Real

Many FM professionals leave because they cannot see a future within the organisation. This does not always mean promotion immediately. It often means:

- growth
- learning
- responsibility
- development
- and long-term opportunity

Strong organisations discuss:

- progression pathways
- leadership development
- mentoring
- and future capability openly

Retention improves when people feel they are moving forward rather than standing still.

—
Good operators
make the difficult
look routine
—



Recognition Should Not Be Underestimated

Facilities Management teams often operate behind the scenes. Strong performance can become invisible when operations run smoothly. Yet lack of recognition gradually reduces motivation and engagement. Recognition does not always require large financial incentives. Often it involves:

- visibility
- appreciation
- trust
- involvement
- and respect

Strong leaders regularly acknowledge:

- operational wins
- team contribution
- reliability
- and professionalism

People who feel valued are significantly more likely to remain committed long-term.

Operational Stability Improves Retention

Many FM professionals value stability, clarity, and structure. Environments that constantly feel:

- chaotic
- reactive
- politically unstable
- or operationally unclear

often experience higher turnover. Strong retention environments usually have:

- clear accountability
- structured processes
- realistic expectations
- and calm leadership behaviour

Operational stability creates psychological stability — and psychological stability underpins long-term retention.

—

Not volume
recruitment
Specialist
partnership

—



Culture Is a Major Retention Factor

Facilities Management culture directly affects morale, performance, accountability, and long-term engagement. Strong FM cultures usually value:

- professionalism
- communication
- teamwork
- ownership
- and operational consistency

Toxic cultures often involve:

- blame
- politics
- inconsistency
- poor communication
- or reactive leadership

High-performing FM professionals rarely stay long-term in unstable cultural environments.

Flexibility Increasingly Influences Retention

While many FM roles remain operationally site-based, flexibility still matters. This may involve:

- autonomy
- trust
- flexible scheduling where realistic
- hybrid elements
- or outcome-based management

The strongest professionals increasingly value environments where:

- leadership trusts them
- communication is mature
- and performance matters more than presenteeism

Retention increasingly depends on leadership adaptability — the ability to manage people as individuals, not as a uniform group.

—
The right
people change
buildings,
teams and
businesses
—



Recruitment Quality Affects Retention

Many retention problems begin during recruitment. Poor hiring decisions often create:

- cultural mismatch
- unrealistic expectations
- operational friction
- and future instability

Strong recruitment processes assess:

- behaviour
- communication style
- leadership capability
- and long-term fit — not simply technical competence

The strongest teams are usually built deliberately over time. Rushing to fill vacancies without proper assessment often creates further retention problems downstream.

Onboarding Is Often Overlooked

The first few months significantly influence long-term retention. Weak onboarding often creates:

- confusion
- poor integration
- unclear expectations
- and reduced confidence

Strong onboarding provides:

- structure
- support
- clarity
- communication
- and operational context

People settle faster when they feel welcomed, informed, and supported early. First impressions of leadership and culture are formed quickly — and are difficult to reverse.

The best
FM leaders
bring calm to
complexity



Retention Requires Ongoing Attention

Retention is not something organisations solve once. It requires ongoing leadership attention. Strong organisations regularly assess:

- engagement
- workload
- operational pressure
- communication quality
- and team morale

Waiting until resignation conversations begin is usually too late. The strongest retention strategies are proactive rather than reactive — built on consistent leadership behaviour, not crisis management.

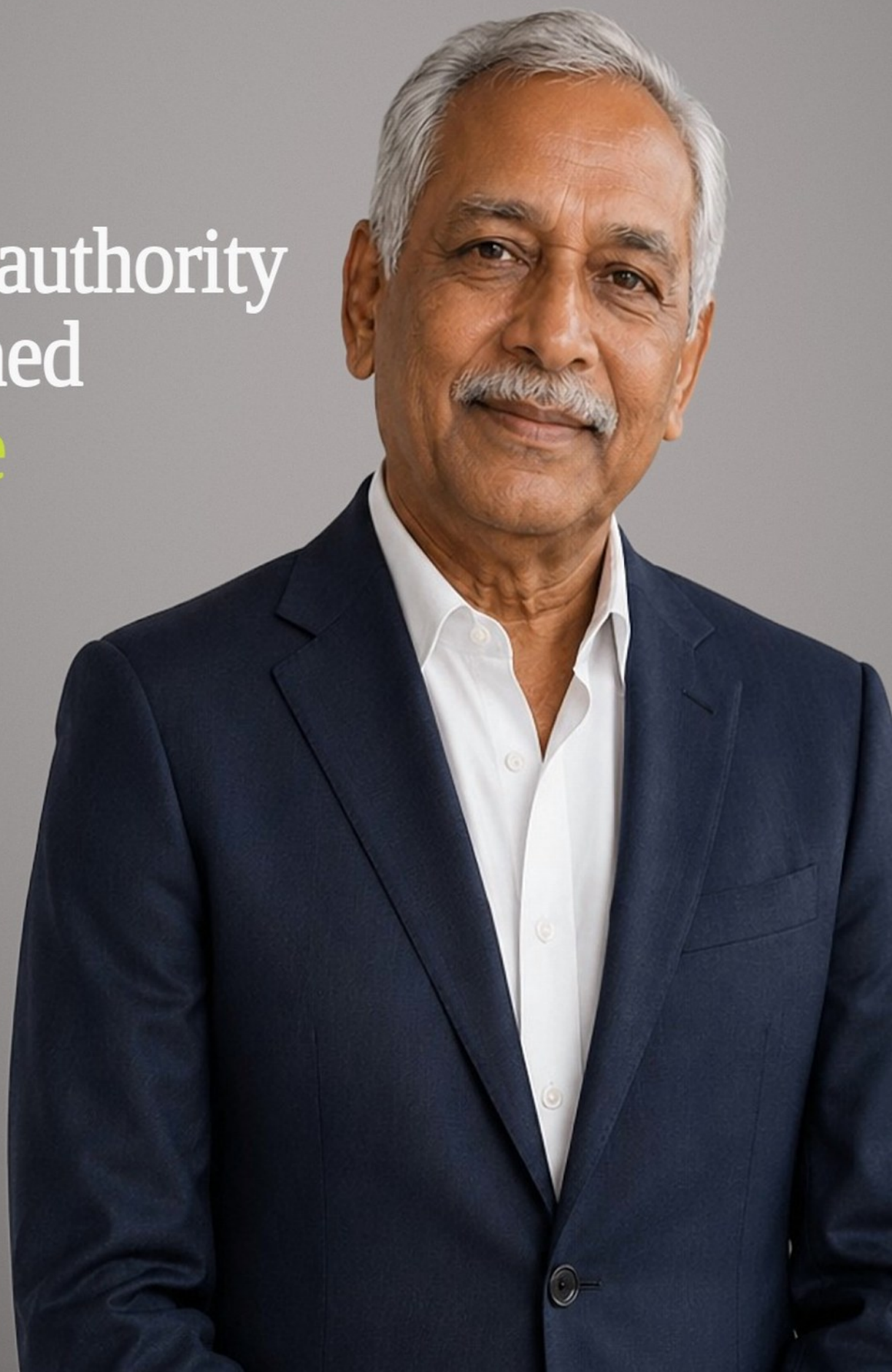
Warning Signs of Future Turnover

Strong leaders identify disengagement patterns early and address them proactively. Common warning signs include:

- disengagement and emotional withdrawal
- reduced communication
- increased frustration
- operational fatigue
- declining morale
- and a gradual drop in discretionary effort

When multiple warning signs appear together, intervention is required quickly. Waiting for formal confirmation of intent to leave often means the decision has already been made.

Quiet authority
is earned
on site



What High-Performing FM Professionals Usually Want

Many strong Facilities Management professionals consistently value:

- calm leadership
- trust and professional respect
- operational clarity
- manageable pressure
- career progression
- and stable environments

Most do not expect perfection. But they do expect professionalism. Organisations that understand this — and build cultures around it — tend to retain the strongest people over the longest periods.

Conclusion

Reducing staff turnover within Facilities Management requires more than salary increases or reactive counteroffers. Strong retention is usually built through:

- leadership quality
- communication
- operational stability
- realistic expectations
- and long-term investment in people

As the FM market becomes increasingly competitive, organisations that retain strong talent will gain major operational advantages over those constantly rebuilding teams. The strongest Facilities Management environments are rarely those with the highest pressure. They are usually those where people feel trusted, supported, valued, and able to perform consistently long-term.

What the Data Says

The evidence on staff turnover: UK churn levels, the effect of ineffective managers, real pay pressure and workload as a cause of stress.

- Average annual churn among UK workers is 34%: 27.4% move to a new employer and 6.6% are not working a year later.
Source: [CIPD, Benchmarking employee turnover: What are the latest trends and insights?, 2024](#)
- Half of UK workers who rate their manager as ineffective plan to leave within 12 months, versus 21% of others.
Source: [Chartered Management Institute \(CMI\), Better Management Report: Take Responsibility, Take Action, 2023](#)
- After inflation (CPIH), regular pay in Great Britain grew by just 0.6% a year in May to July 2026.
Source: [Office for National Statistics, Average weekly earnings in Great Britain: September 2026](#)
- Heavy workloads are the top cause of stress-related absence, cited by 41% of UK organisations reporting such absence.
Source: [CIPD \(supported by Simplyhealth\), Health and wellbeing at work 2025](#)
- 95% of candidates placed by Maxwell Stephens remain in role one year after appointment.
Source: [Maxwell Stephens, 2026](#)

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

See It in Practice

EMI London Facilities Manager Recruitment

During significant corporate restructuring and ownership change, EMI appointed Maxwell Stephens to find a Facilities Manager to lead the operational transition at its London headquarters. We assessed candidates on change management, outsourcing and business continuity as well as leadership style. The appointee maintained continuity throughout and transferred 17 Facilities employees into a new outsourced operating model with 100% staff retention.

It shows how capable leadership through uncertainty keeps a team intact and protects organisational knowledge.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/emi-records-london-facilities-management-transition](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/emi-records-london-facilities-management-transition)

Related Reading

- **Why Facilities Managers Change Jobs and How to Improve Retention**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/navigating-the-evolving-fm-landscape-understanding-the-reasons-behind-job-changes
- **How to Build Employee Loyalty and Reduce Unwanted Turnover**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/securing-employee-loyalty-practical-ways-to-encourage-employee-loyalty
- **How to Spot Unhappy Employees and Re-Engage Them**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/5-signs-your-employees-are-unhappy-and-how-to-fix-it

Talk to Maxwell Stephens

Planning an FM, estates or workplace appointment? [Contact us](#) for a confidential conversation, or [browse more case studies](#).



A FINE POSITION TO BE IN



**maxwell
stephens**
Recruitment

Maxwell Stephens Recruitment is registered in
England and Wales No. 02660883



CONTACT

t: 0207 118 4848

w: www.maxwellstephens.com
e: info@maxwellstephens.com



LONDON

Golden Cross House
8 Duncannon Street
Strand
London
WC2N 4JF