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INSIGHT

Relocating for an FM Role



Introduction

Facilities Management is a national profession with very local roles. The best job for your next step may be a hundred miles from your front door, in a city you have only passed through, with an employer whose estate you have only seen in photographs. Relocation is often the price of a real career move, and it is a bigger decision than most people treat it.

The danger is that the job itself dominates the conversation. The offer is exciting, the salary is better, the site is impressive. Meanwhile the questions that decide whether the move works, such as what the household needs, what the whole thing costs and what happens if it goes wrong, get put off until after you have said yes.

This guide helps you do it in the right order. It begins with whether the move is worth considering at all, then walks through costing, negotiating support, testing the area, involving your family, the alternatives to a full move and the first six months in a new place. It also looks at what is different about FM markets across regions.

It is written for FM, estates and workplace professionals considering a move for a role, whether a first move away from home or the fourth of a long career. It does not give tax, legal or financial advice, so take professional advice on those parts before committing.

Start with why: the role, or the life?

People relocate for two quite different reasons. Some move for the role, because the next step in their career is not available locally. Others move for the life, because they want a different place, and the job is the way to get there. Both are valid. They need different tests.

If you are moving for the role, ask whether the same step could be reached closer to home, even if it takes longer. FM is concentrated in some areas and thin in others, but most regions have large employers, healthcare, education, retail, industrial and public sector estates. Be sure you are not relocating for something you could find within a commute.

If you are moving for the life, be honest that the job is a means. That is perfectly sensible, but it changes the risk. If the role fails, you want the place to be worth staying in. Ask whether you would still want to live there if you lost this job, because in FM, as anywhere, jobs can end.

Either way, write down what success looks like in two years. A better role, a better home, a better balance? If you cannot describe it, you cannot tell afterwards whether the move was worth it.

- Could this step be reached within a commute? Be honest about the answer.
- Would you want to live there if the job ended?
- Is this a move towards something or away from something?
- Who else is affected, and have they been asked?

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The best moves are considered ones



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Cost the whole move, not just the new salary

A relocation has a price, and the price is rarely only the removal van. Build a full picture before you compare the new salary with the old one.

Start with the one-off costs: selling and buying fees or deposits and agency fees if renting, removals, storage, legal costs, any overlap on rent or mortgage, travel for viewings, new furniture, and the odd costs that appear when two homes run side by side. Then look at the running costs: housing, council tax, travel, parking, childcare and any difference in the cost of everyday life. Housing costs can vary a great deal between regions, so check current figures for the actual area and do not rely on assumptions.

Then think about the double running period. Few people move cleanly on one day. You may be paying for lodging near the new job while your family stays put, or carrying two homes while one is sold. Plan for months of overlap, not weeks, and ask what happens if the sale takes longer than expected.

Finally, put a value on what you lose. Local support, childcare from relatives, a partner's job, a social network, a house you love. These do not go on a spreadsheet, but ignoring them is how a good salary becomes a bad move.

Take advice from a financial adviser or accountant on the tax treatment of any relocation payment you are offered, because the rules can be complicated and change.

- List one-off costs, running costs and the cost of the overlap period separately.
- Check actual housing and travel costs in the new area, not general impressions.
- Build a worst case in which the sale or the lease takes twice as long.
- Decide the minimum net gain that makes the move worth the disruption.

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Your next role should stretch you



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Negotiate the relocation support in writing

Relocation support is negotiable, and it is easier to discuss before you accept than after. Many employers have a policy, some have a budget, and some will improvise if you ask a clear question. Do not assume that an offer without support means there is none.

Think about what you actually need. This might be a lump sum, a set of reimbursed costs, temporary accommodation for a period, help with removals, a contribution to legal fees, travel home while you settle, or a later start date to allow for the sale. Different employers structure it differently. A clear request for specific items is easier to approve than a vague request for help.

Read the conditions carefully. Many packages include a repayment clause if you leave within a set period. That is reasonable, but check how long the period is, whether the repayment reduces over time and what counts as leaving. If the employer ends your employment, ask whether repayment still applies. Get the whole arrangement in your contract or a signed letter, not in an email chain or a conversation.

Be realistic about how you ask. Present it as part of making the move workable, not as a demand. A sensible employer who wants you will want the move to succeed too.

- Ask what the policy is before you propose your own terms.
- Request specific items, not a general uplift.
- Check repayment clauses, their length and the circumstances that trigger them.
- Agree the start date to match your realistic timeline.
- Take professional advice on tax and on contract terms you do not fully understand.

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Know your worth, know your market



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Test the area and the employer before you commit

You would not take a lease on a building without surveying it. Treat a move the same way. Visit the area more than once, at different times, and not only on the day of the interview when everything is polished.

Spend a weekend there as a resident would. Walk the neighbourhoods you might live in. Drive the commute at rush hour. Visit the shops, the schools and the doctors, find the places you would use on an ordinary Tuesday. Ask yourself whether you can see your life there, or only the job.

Do the same for the employer. See the site on a normal working day, not a staged visit. Speak to people in the team away from the hiring manager if you can. Ask how long people stay and how many have relocated for the organisation before, and how they got on.

If at all possible, test the change cheaply before taking the irreversible step. Rent first before buying. Spend a few weeks working from lodgings. Many people who regret a move say afterwards that they bought a house in a hurry to prove they were committed.

Keep notes as you go. After each visit, write down what you liked, what worried you and what you still do not know. Two weeks later you will have a far more honest picture than any single impression, and a list of questions to put to the employer before you accept.

- Visit at least twice, once on a weekday and once on a weekend.
- Drive your actual commute at the actual time.
- Rent before you buy, unless you are certain about the area.
- Ask the employer about previous staff who relocated, and talk to one if you can.

Bring the household into the decision early

A relocation is rarely one person's decision, even if one person gets the job. Partners, children and relatives all carry a share of the change, and a move that works for you and fails for them will not last.

Have the hard conversation before you accept. What does your partner do, and can they do it there? What do children need, in terms of schools, friends and stability? Who relies on you or whom do you rely on for care? What would make someone in the household say no, and have you asked them directly?

Be honest about the pressure. A job offer creates momentum, and it is easy to hurry people through the decision because of the employer's deadline. Ask for time if you need it. A reasonable employer will understand that a relocation is a household decision.

Agree a plan for what happens if it does not work. It might be a review point after a year, a commitment to rent rather than buy, or a clear understanding of who would move again. Having that conversation does not weaken the move, it makes it more honest.

- Agree what each person needs to make the move work.
- Look at schools, childcare and healthcare early, and check current availability in the new area.
- Discuss the partner's career as seriously as your own.
- Set a review date and agree what a failed move would mean.

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Good careers start with a call



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Consider the middle options before the full move

Relocation is not a choice between staying put and uprooting everything. There is a spectrum, and in FM the middle options are often under-used.

Weekly commuting is common in operational roles. You live near the site during the working week and return home at weekends. It is tiring and expensive in time, but it reduces risk, lets the household settle at its own pace and tells you whether you actually like the job before you move your life. Agree how long it will last and what the employer will contribute.

Interim and fixed-term roles can work the same way, giving you a chance to test a location and an employer with a defined end. If the role is permanent, ask about a longer probation structure that gives both sides time to be sure. Hybrid arrangements may help for some positions, but be realistic about how much of an FM job can be done remotely.

The decision rule: if the move is big, reversible steps are better than irreversible ones. Use the first six to twelve months to prove the job and the place before you sell the house. If the employer will not support a staged approach, that tells you how much they are investing in your success.

- Agree a defined period of weekly commuting and what support comes with it.
- Consider a fixed-term or interim engagement as a trial of the location.
- Keep your existing home until you are sure.
- Write down the condition that would make you commit to the full move.

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Clarity now saves months later



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Know how FM markets differ by region

FM is not the same everywhere. The mix of employers, the shape of contracts and the competition for talent vary between regions, and that matters if you move.

Large city centres tend to have concentrations of corporate occupiers, commercial property and major service providers. Other areas lean more towards healthcare, education, manufacturing, logistics, defence or the public sector. Each has its own culture, its own compliance emphasis and its own pay pressures. Check which sectors dominate the area you are considering, because they determine how many alternative employers you would have if this job did not work out.

Think about your exit. If you move to a place with one dominant employer in your field, your leverage is limited. If you move to a place with a healthy mix of employers, you can leave without moving again. Ask yourself what your next job would be and where it would be.

Be aware also that the regulatory and public sector context can differ between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. If your move crosses a border, check the current position with your advisers and your prospective employer, particularly on building standards, public sector arrangements and licensing. Do not assume that your existing knowledge transfers automatically.

Finally, keep your professional network alive. Branch events, trade bodies and local forums will help you build local contacts in a new area faster than waiting for them to appear.

- List the employers in your field within a sensible commute of the new location.
- Ask what the next role after this one would look like locally.
- Check whether regulatory or procurement differences apply across borders.
- Join local professional groups early.

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It starts with a good first call



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Plan the first six months in the new place

The move itself is a few weeks. The settling in takes much longer, and it is where most relocations are won or lost. Plan for it.

At work, expect a steeper learning curve than normal, because you are learning a new estate, a new team and a new place at once. Use the early weeks to listen, and to find out who holds the knowledge about the building, the contractors and the local authorities. Resist making big changes before you understand the context. Ask your manager what good looks like at thirty, sixty and ninety days.

Outside work, build routines deliberately. Find a regular activity, a local group, a gym, a club, somewhere you will meet people who have nothing to do with the job. Isolation is the quiet risk of a relocation, especially if the household has stayed behind or arrives later. Plan visits home and visits from family so that the first months are not only work.

Set a check-in at six months with yourself and the household. Ask whether the job is what you expected, whether the cost is what you planned and whether everyone is settling. If something is wrong, you will have caught it while it is still fixable.

Treat the first year as a trial of the decision. Be willing to adjust, and willing to say that it is not working, if it is not.

Be patient with the dip. Many people feel a wobble around the third or fourth month, when the novelty fades and the old routines are not yet replaced. That is normal, and the answer is usually more contact with people, not a snap decision.

- Ask your manager to define success at thirty, sixty and ninety days.
- Learn the local contractors, authorities and supply chain early.
- Build non-work routines in the first month.
- Schedule a six month review with the household.

Relocation decision checklist

- [ ] Write down whether you are moving for the role or for the life, and what success looks like in two years.
- [ ] Check whether the same step is available within a commute of home.
- [ ] Cost one-off, running and overlap expenses, including a worst case for delays.
- [ ] Take professional advice on tax and financial questions before you commit.
- [ ] Ask what relocation support is available and request specific items.
- [ ] Check repayment conditions and get every agreed term in writing.
- [ ] Visit the area and the site more than once, including at rush hour.
- [ ] Discuss the move with everyone affected before you accept.
- [ ] Consider weekly commuting, an interim role or renting before a full move.
- [ ] Plan the first ninety days at work and the first six months outside it.

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Right person, right moment



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Next steps

A good relocation is planned like a project, with costs, risks, a timeline and a way of reversing if you have to. The employers worth moving for will support that planning rather than rush you past it.

If you are weighing a move and want an informed view of the market in a particular region, Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy. Start this week by writing down your reasons for moving and costing the first six months in full.

A FINE POSITION TO BE IN

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