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MAXWELL STEPHENS GUIDES

FOR CANDIDATES

Your first week in a new FM role



Setting up the first days for success

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IN THIS GUIDE

Your first week in a new FM role

01	Introduction	03
02	Before You Start	05
03	Day One	07
04	Meeting People	09
05	Learning the Building	11
06	Contracts and Suppliers	13
07	Compliance and Risk	15
08	Building Early Credibility	17
09	Your First 30, 60 and 90 Days	18
10	If It Is Not What You Expected	19
11	Your Questions Answered	20
12	Final Thoughts	21
13	What the Data Says	22
14	See It in Practice	23

01
Introduction

The first week in a new role sets the tone. People form impressions quickly, you form impressions of them, and the habits you build in these first days often last. In facilities management, where you may inherit sites, contracts, suppliers and live issues, a good start matters more than most.

You may feel pressure to prove yourself immediately. In practice, the best first weeks are about listening, learning, building relationships and making sure you are safe and set up to work. Quick wins come later.

This guide covers what to do before you start, what to expect on day one, how to run the first week, who to meet, what to learn about the building and the contracts, how to handle compliance and risk, how to build early credibility, and how to plan your first 30, 60 and 90 days.

THE CORE IDEA

In your first week, be curious, be visible and be careful. Learn how things really work before you change them.

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Hire for the building you will have next

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02
Before You Start

A little preparation makes day one far easier.

- Confirm your start date, time, location and who to ask for.
- Ask for any pre-reading: org chart, site plans, contract summaries.
- Check what to bring: right to work documents, ID, bank details, qualifications.
- Plan your journey and arrive early.
- Ask about dress code and PPE.
- Look up the people you will meet on LinkedIn.

STAY IN TOUCH

A short message to your new manager a few days before starting, saying you are looking forward to it and asking if there is anything to read, makes a good impression.

If you are still in your notice period, our article on creating an effective onboarding programme shows what a good start looks like from the employer's side.

Use the gap before day one

The days before you start are the only time you can prepare without the pressure of a live building. If you can, find out about the sector, the main contracts and any recent news about the site or the organisation. You do not need to arrive with answers. You need to arrive with good questions and a sense of what the role is likely to involve.

Sort out the practicalities

- [x] Travel and parking, including out-of-hours access
- [x] Cover at home for your first few long days
- [x] A notebook and a pen that works
- [x] A short, clear answer to the question "tell me about yourself"
- [x] Your qualification certificates and any professional membership details

If you are still working your notice, keep your focus on your current employer until you leave. A clean handover protects your reputation, and our guide to how to resign well and protect your reputation covers it.

> **"Be curious, be visible and be careful.**

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Great teams start with listening

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03
Day One

Expect admin, introductions and a lot of information.

- Meet your manager and agree how you will work together.
- Complete the induction, health and safety briefing and site access.
- Receive equipment, systems access and any keys or passes.
- Meet your immediate team.
- Ask for a first-week plan, or draft one yourself.

Ask early

- ☑ What does success look like in the first 90 days?
- ☑ What are the biggest issues right now?
- ☑ Who are the key people I should meet?
- ☑ How does the manager like to communicate and be updated?
- ☑ Are there any urgent compliance or safety matters?

What a good first day looks like

A good first day is not about output. It is about getting access, meeting people and understanding what is expected of you. Be patient if systems are not ready or the induction is thin, because that is common. Ask for what you need, and write down anything that is missing so that you can chase it politely.

Practical points

- Write down names and roles as you meet people, with one detail to help you remember each.
- Check that you can reach every part of the site you need, and who to call if you cannot.
- Find out how to report an incident or a near miss, and how out-of-hours cover works.
- Ask for the emergency contact list and save the key numbers in your phone.

TAKE NOTES

You will receive more information than you can remember. A notebook shows you are taking things seriously.

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Calm leaders earn trust

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04
Meeting People

FM is a people business. Relationships are a large part of the job.

> ASK THE SAME FEW QUESTIONS
> What works well? What frustrates you? What would you change? What should I know? The patterns tell you where to focus.

Our article on networking for introverts has practical ideas if meeting many new people feels draining.

Who to meet, and why

WHO	WHY IT MATTERS
Your manager	Sets expectations and priorities, and how you will be judged
Your team	Knows how the site really runs, and decides how willingly it runs for you
Key stakeholders	Define what good service looks like
Main contractors	Deliver much of the service and know the history
Security, reception and cleaning	See the building every day and hear complaints first
Health and safety and compliance contacts	Hold the records you will be accountable for

In your first conversations, listen more than you speak. Ask open questions, note what is repeated and avoid taking sides in any history you hear. People will tell you what has gone wrong before. Hold it lightly until you have seen it for yourself.

If you are leading a team

Meet each person individually in the first week or two, even briefly. Ask what they do, what they would keep and what they would change. Be clear about how you like to work and when you will come back to them. Our guide to the first 90 days when onboarding a new FM leader looks at this from the leader's side.

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Standards are a daily habit

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05

Learning the Building

Walk the site. Do it more than once, and at different times.

- Tour every floor, plant room, roof and external area with someone who knows it.
- Find fire exits, assembly points, isolation points and emergency controls.
- Note condition, cleanliness and any obvious hazards.
- Meet the engineers, security staff and cleaners on shift.
- Ask about recent incidents and complaints.
- Learn the site's history: refurbishments, recurring faults, past problems.

> VISIT OUT OF HOURS
>
> If you can, see the site at night or at weekends. You learn how it behaves when nobody is watching.

If you are starting in a new sector, our guide to working in different FM sectors explains how priorities differ.

What to look for on a walk round

- [x] Plant rooms: access, labelling, cleanliness and any sign of leaks or heat
- [x] Fire doors, exits and signage in the condition they should be
- [x] Roofs and external areas: drainage, access control and unsecured access points
- [x] Storage areas and risers, and anything stored that should not be
- [x] Repairs that look temporary but have clearly been there for months
- [x] Any area people avoid or complain about

Keep a running list of what you see, split into urgent, important and later. Urgent means a risk to people. Verify what you find before you share it, then give your manager a short, organised list rather than raising each observation as it comes.

Learn the systems

Find out which systems the team uses, such as the helpdesk, the CAFM system, the building management system, access control and permit to work. Ask for access in week one, and ask to see how a typical request moves from report to completion. That one journey reveals a lot about how well the operation runs.

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Clear briefs make better hires

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06

Contracts and Suppliers

Most FM leaders manage through suppliers, so understanding contracts early is essential.

- Read the main contracts: scope, service levels, term and break dates.
- Check how performance is measured and reported.
- Review any open disputes, variations or late payments.
- Meet key suppliers and ask how they see the relationship.
- Check budgets, spend to date and commitments.

> ASK WHAT IS NOT WRITTEN DOWN
>
> Informal arrangements, verbal promises and local practice often matter as much as the paper.

Our article on managing contractors and suppliers is a useful companion.

What to find out about each contract

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
What is in scope, and what is not?	Prevents disputes and gaps in service
When does it end, and when can it be broken?	Decides when you can change supplier
How is performance measured?	Shows whether the numbers match what you see
What is the spend against budget?	Spots overspend and pending variations
Who is the supplier's main contact, and who is the escalation?	Saves time when something goes wrong

Meet each key supplier in your first few weeks, ideally on site. Ask what is working, what is not and what they would change. Avoid promising changes you cannot yet deliver. Suppliers notice how a new client behaves in the first weeks, and a fair, direct approach earns better service in the long run.

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Strong shortlists are short

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07

Compliance and Risk

Health, safety and statutory compliance are the first thing to check in any FM role.

- Ask for the compliance register: fire, water hygiene, electrical, gas, lifts, asbestos, pressure systems.
- Check dates of the latest inspections and any overdue actions.
- Review risk assessments and incident logs.
- Confirm who holds duties and responsibilities.
- Raise any serious concern immediately, in writing.

The HSE publishes guidance on managing health and safety, and its statistics show the scale of the issue: 1.9 million workers suffered from work-related ill health in 2024/25, and workplace injury and ill health cost Britain an estimated £22.9 billion in 2023/24.

Build a simple compliance picture

In the first two weeks, aim for a one-page view of the compliance position: what must be checked, how often, who does it, when it was last done and whether anything is overdue. If the records are incomplete, say so early. It is far better to start with an honest picture than to find the gaps later.

AREA	ASK TO SEE
Fire safety	Risk assessment, alarm and emergency lighting test records, drill records
Water safety	Risk assessment, temperature and flushing records
Electrical and gas	Inspection certificates and any outstanding actions
Lifts and lifting equipment	Examination reports
Asbestos	Register and management plan, where relevant

Who holds what

Find out who holds formal duties, such as the responsible person for fire safety, and whether those appointments are documented and current. If you are taking on a named role, make sure you understand what it involves before you accept it.

> **NEVER IGNORE A SAFETY CONCERN**
>
> If you find something that could hurt someone, act on it first and explain afterwards. That is exactly what employers hope you will do.

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Hire the person, not just the CV

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08

Building Early Credibility

Credibility comes from reliability, not showmanship.

- Do what you say you will do, and tell people when you cannot.
- Respond quickly to requests, even if only to acknowledge them.
- Be visible on site and approachable.
- Give credit to others and learn names quickly.
- Avoid criticising what came before, or announcing big changes in week one.
- Look for one small, useful improvement to deliver early.

Habits that build trust

1. Keep a list of what you have promised and check it weekly.
2. Close the loop: when someone raises something, tell them what happened.
3. Be honest when you do not know. Say you will find out, then do.
4. Keep your manager informed before they have to ask.
5. Hold the same standards and tone with every team.

What to avoid

- ✓ Announcing large changes before you understand the history
- ✓ Criticising your predecessor or the previous supplier
- ✓ Taking sides in long-running disagreements
- ✓ Promising what you cannot yet deliver
- ✓ Working so hard that you are exhausted by week three

Credibility is built in small, repeated moments. By the end of the first week, most people will have formed a view on whether you listen, follow through and stay calm.

QUICK WINS

Fix a minor, visible irritation, such as a broken door closer or a confusing sign. It shows you listen and that things happen when you are around.

09

Your First 30, 60 and 90 Days

Write a simple plan and share it with your manager.

PERIOD	FOCUS	OUTPUT
First 30 days	Listen, learn, meet people, understand compliance	Notes, relationship map, list of risks and questions
Days 31 to 60	Prioritise, agree goals, start improving	Agreed priorities and a few early wins
Days 61 to 90	Deliver, review and plan ahead	Progress report and a plan for the next quarter

REVIEW WITH YOUR MANAGER

Ask for feedback at the end of week one, month one and month three. It shows you want to improve, and prevents surprises.

Retention matters too. Our article on employee retention strategies in 2026 looks at what keeps people in a role.

What to include in your plan

- Three or four priorities, agreed with your manager
- The relationships you need to build, and by when
- The compliance and contract reviews you will complete
- Early wins that are realistic and visible
- Questions you need answered, and who can answer them

Keep the plan to one page. A plan that is easy to read is a plan that gets used. The structure in our guide to presenting a 30-60-90 day plan at interview works just as well once you are in post.

10
If It Is Not What You Expected

Occasionally a role differs from the description. Do not decide in week one.

- Give it time, usually several weeks.
- Write down specific concerns.
- Raise them calmly with your manager.
- Talk to your recruiter. We stay in touch after placement and can help.
- Look after your wellbeing.

Maxwell Stephens has recruited in FM since 2006. We keep in touch with candidates after they start. If you need to talk, call 0207 118 4848 or contact us.

Separate settling in from a real mismatch

Every new role has a wobble in the first few weeks. Learn to tell the normal discomfort of doing something new from a genuine gap between what you were told and what you found. Normal wobbles ease as you learn the job. A genuine mismatch, such as a different scope, unrealistic expectations or missing authority, does not.

WHAT YOU NOTICE	WHAT TO DO
You feel out of your depth on technical detail	Ask for support and plan the learning you need
The scope is wider than described	Raise it with your manager, with specifics, and agree priorities
Resources are not what you were told	Document the gap and discuss how to close it
A safety or compliance concern	Raise it immediately, in writing
The culture does not suit you	Give it time, talk to people you trust and take advice if it persists

11
Your Questions Answered

What should I wear on day one?

Smart and practical. Ask about the dress code and PPE before you start.

How much should I change in the first week?

Very little. Listen and learn first.

What if I find a compliance problem?

Raise it immediately with your manager, in writing, and act on any immediate risk.

How do I handle a team that is wary of the new manager?

Listen, be visible and keep your promises. Trust takes time.

Should I ask lots of questions?

Yes. It is expected, and it shows you take the role seriously.

What if my induction is poor?

Ask for what you need, and draft your own plan.

Should I take on projects in my first week?

Be wary. Take on small, clear tasks and avoid committing to large projects until you understand the site, the people and the budget.

How long does it take to feel settled?

Many people feel more settled after a few weeks and more confident after a few months. Every site and role differs, and larger portfolios take longer.

12
Final Thoughts

A good first week is calm and curious. Prepare in advance, meet the people who matter, walk the building and learn the contracts and compliance position. Be reliable, be visible and hold back on big changes.

Plan your first 30, 60 and 90 days and review progress with your manager. If something is not right, speak up early.

If you would like support as you start a new role, call 0207 118 4848 or email us.

THE EVIDENCE

What the Data Says

What data shows about health and safety, retention and early experience.

£22.9 billion

Workplace injuries and ill health from current working conditions cost Great Britain an estimated £22.9 billion in 2023/24.

Source: Health and Safety Executive, Key figures for Great Britain

41%

41% of UK organisations that selected candidates in the past year said new recruits always, mostly or sometimes resigned within their first 12 weeks.

Source: CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024

95%

95% of candidates placed by Maxwell Stephens remain in role one year after appointment.

Source: Maxwell Stephens, 2026

34%

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, 2024

84%

84% of FM leaders worldwide identify escalating operating costs and budget constraints as their top concern.

Source: JLL, Global State of Facilities Management Report 2025

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

CASE STUDY

See It in Practice

Senior Facilities Manager Recruitment for Toyota GB

Toyota GB appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Senior Facilities Manager after the existing postholder announced their retirement. The role covered the Burgh Heath head office and the Burnaston Academy, with responsibility for outsourced providers, significant budgets, health and safety, projects and sustainability. We ran a full search and assessed candidates on their ability to provide continuity while bringing new thinking, with cultural alignment weighted as heavily as technical experience. The appointment delivered a managed succession, and Toyota GB went on to recommend us to its FM service provider, Dalkia.

It shows a managed succession: continuity with new thinking, and cultural alignment weighted as heavily as technical experience, which is what a good first week should aim to build.

Read the full case study · Browse all case studies

FROM THE BLOG

Related Reading

- Top Tips for Creating an Effective Onboarding Program
- Employee Retention Strategies in 2026
- How Can I Analyse a Candidate's Intangible Skills?

MAXWELL STEPHENS INSIGHTS

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- Facilities Management Career Guide
- The Facilities Management Interview Guide
- Facilities Management Salary Guide UK 2026

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