

EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SERVICES

HOW TO...



Property managers play a key role in embedding sustainability requirements within mechanical and electrical (M&E) services, and, alongside facilities managers, checking that contractors are operating as intended. Asset managers have an ongoing interest in ensuring that M&E services comply with regulations alongside any additional requirements they may specify.

The way in which sustainability is incorporated within M&E contracts must be stringent, fair and comprehensive to enable the intended interpreted by M&E contractors and service providers. However, there must also be flexibility for a property manager to take into account any additional requirements guidance or best practice specified by asset managers.

Embedding sustainability requirements within M&E services involves the consideration of the following elements:



1: PROCUREMENT PRACTICE

The procurement stage provides the primary opportunity to influence the sustainability impacts of M&E contracts.

When agreeing the lease, sustainability issues should have been documented between the asset manager and its occupiers. Relevant sustainability requirements can then cascade within M&E contracts to define and confirm acceptance of responsibilities.

Due diligence and pre-screening questionnaires should include consideration of the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act. As this Act acknowledges M&E as a high-risk service in relation to modern slavery, it is important that full checks have been undertaken in contractor selection processes prior to instruction.

Pre-screening should include a check whether M&E sub-contractors have been convicted or had a notice served upon them for infringement of environmental legislation, with further investigation into the circumstances, with subsequent action, where necessary.

Ideally, M&E sub-contractors should be required to operate a certified Environmental Management System, or at least have a documented process for identifying and managing significant environmental and/or social sustainability aspects and impacts.

It is important that property managers consider the development of specific clauses relating to sustainability for inclusion within M&E contracts. The information set out within this guidance note may be helpful in guiding the development of these clauses.

While there are currently no set, standard sustainability clauses relating to M&E contracts, property managers should consult a range of sources to develop relevant clauses that will drive continual improvement, and that are likely to be consistent with requirements set for M&E contractors across the real estate sector. These sectors may include:

- Engaging facilities managers within a property or asset managers wider supply chain.
- Reviewing experience with existing contractors.
- Peer-to-peer discussions with other property managers in open forums.

2: SCOPE OF SERVICES

It is important that M&E contractors are able to demonstrate competency in a broad range of services that have the potential to influence the sustainability performance of a property. Key focus areas may include, for example:

- Routine alignment of control and timer settings.
- Maximising the use of smart technology, such as a Building Management System, and proactively managing plant performance.
- Use of remote data to support performance evaluation.
- Product and plant specification to optimise efficiencies and in preparing planned preventative maintenance regimes.
- Monitoring and targeting proactively and in real time.
- Engagement with stakeholders and supply chains to align objectives and targets for each property.

3: TRAINING

An M&E contractor has the potential to influence a property's sustainability performance, in particular in relation to energy and water consumption.

It is important that early and ongoing engagement with M&E contractors is undertaken to raise awareness sustainability objectives and targets, and to confirm that confirmation that employees receive appropriate training.

Key aspects of awareness raising and training for M&E teams relate to:

- Understanding a property's consumption profile to assist property managers in meeting property energy and water targets.
- The appropriate use of controls and timers on a property's lighting, heating and air-conditioning resources to minimise use but also provide the required ambient conditions.
- Balancing multiple desired M&E outcomes, for example, relating to increased air circulation requirements in line with emerging COVID-19 protocols while continuing to pursue energy efficiency targets.

If there is any equipment containing F-gas onsite, it is best practice to ensure competency records for managing F-gas equipment (such as ACRIB cards) are held onsite for all M&E contractors who visit to conduct F-gas maintenance.

Training and sustainability performance targets should be reviewed periodically to support maintenance of high standards. Property and facilities managers should consider providing training material in languages other than English, to align with the demographics of the M&E contractors' personnel.



**UNDERSTANDING
A PROPERTY'S
CONSUMPTION PROFILE**



**APPROPRIATE USE
OF CONTROLS
AND TIMERS**



**BALANCING
MULTIPLE DESIRED
M&E OUTCOMES**

4: M&E AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The activities of M&E contractors can have a significant impact on a building's sustainability performance.

In many properties, M&E staff directly control the running times of plant, programme settings and the strategy around electricity and gas and, consequently, associated greenhouse gas emissions.

A Property Manager should liaise with both the asset manager and occupiers to agree how M&E schedules can be aligned to energy strategies, and, particularly, to Net Zero aspirations.

M&E contractors should be fully engaged in carbon reduction programmes, including the design of planned, preventative maintenance programmes and the identification of energy saving opportunities.

Whilst it is important that heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) systems in a building operate at hours that match the times when they are required, these need constant review as occupier requirements change and seasonal temperatures vary.

In response to this, it is important that M&E contracts include the need for contractors to demonstrate active engagement with an adaptable approach to HVAC services.

For example, it may not be necessary to heat or ventilate a whole building if it is not fully occupied. In many properties, lighting and heating often remain on much longer than necessary and M&E teams should be empowered, and receive training and access to technology and data, to vary the provision of M&E services accordingly.

5: ONGOING MONITORING

Performance standards

In order to ensure that high sustainability performance standards are achieved and maintained, it is important to review both the services provided and products used on a regular basis. This review should be against a clear set of output-based KPIs and undertaken as part of annual contract reviews.

For M&E, this could include, for example, records of F-gas usage or trends in energy consumption compared across equivalent degree days.

Where standards are found to be lacking, property managers should work collaboratively with the service provider to establish the reason for under-performance. This may relate to, for example, insufficient resourcing, training or communication. Following the review, an improvement plan should be mutually agreed.

Regulatory requirements

Facilities Management should ensure there is a formal process in place to review changes in legislation and to ensure any applicable changes in legislations are included in contract renewals.

6: SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

As M&E falls into a high risk service category in respect of employment processes, checks should be undertaken routinely on the service provider.

This should include checking that directly employed staff and, as far as possible, any other staff in the supply chain are offered a safe place to work where there is no bullying, harassment, discrimination or unreasonable working conditions of any kind (e.g. unpaid work excessive working hours). The Property Manager has responsibility for ensuring that there are demonstrable policies and processes in place to ensure this.