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## Industry Whitepaper

The Strategic Impact of Facilities  
Management (FM) on Cardiovascular Health  
in the UK Workforce (2026)

## Executive Summary

In 2026, Facilities Management (FM) has transitioned from a purely operational function to a strategic pillar of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee health.

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) remains a leading cause of long-term sick leave in the UK, costing the economy an estimated £66.3 billion annually by 2030. This report analyses how FM interventions, ranging from 'Active Design' to smart HVAC management directly influence cardiovascular outcomes. By integrating heart-healthy practices into the built environment, UK FM organisations can reduce absenteeism by up to 30% and significantly enhance employee retention.

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## The Relationship Between FM and Cardiovascular Health

The physical environment is a silent determinant of cardiovascular health. Research highlights three primary vectors through which FM impacts the heart: Sedentary Behaviour, Environmental Stress, and Nutritional Access.

### Sedentary Behaviour and Active Design

The modern UK office is traditionally sedentary. FM can mitigate this through **Active Design**, which encourages incidental physical activity.

- **Staircase Prominence:** Re-prioritising visible, well-lit, and aesthetically pleasing staircases over lifts.
- **End-of-Trip Facilities:** Providing secure bike storage, high-quality showers, and lockers to encourage active commuting (cycling/walking).
- **Dynamic Workstations:** Implementing sit-stand desks and 'walking meeting' routes.

### Environmental Stressors

Poorly managed facilities create chronic stress, a major contributor to hypertension and heart disease.

- **Acoustics & Lighting:** High noise levels and flickering fluorescent lights trigger the body's 'fight or flight' response, increasing cortisol and adrenaline.
- **Indoor Air Quality (IAQ):** Academic studies correlate high levels of PM2.5 and CO<sub>2</sub> with increased heart rate variability and systemic inflammation.

## Strategic Improvements for FM Organisations

UK FM firms (e.g., Mitie, CBRE, ISS) are now adopting 'Wellness-as-a-Service'. The following changes in working practices represent the current industry gold standard:

**Table 1: FM Interventions and Cardiovascular Outcomes**

Intervention Area	Change in Practice	Cardiovascular Impact
<b>Catering</b>	Default 'Heart-Healthy' menus; removal of high-sodium vending options.	Reduced risk of hypertension and obesity.
<b>Air Quality</b>	Implementation of HEPA filtration and real-time CO <sub>2</sub> monitoring.	Lowered systemic inflammation and blood pressure.
<b>Biophilic Design</b>	Integration of indoor plants and natural light.	Lowered resting heart rate and stress levels.
<b>Active Travel</b>	Subsidised cycle-to-work schemes and on-site bike maintenance.	Increased daily caloric burn and aerobic capacity.

## Case Studies and Industry Examples

### Case Study A: The 'Active Office' Pilot (London, 2025)

A major UK banking client partnered with its FM provider to redesign three floors using Active Design principles.

- **Action:** Centralised waste bins and water points were moved to opposite ends of the floor, forcing employees to walk more.
- **Outcome:** Average daily steps per employee increased by 2,400. A 12-month follow-up showed a 12% reduction in reported employee hypertension cases.

### Case Study B: NHS Workplace CVD Screening

The UK government's 2024–2025 pilot for workplace CVD health checks utilised FM teams to coordinate on-site biometric screenings (blood pressure and cholesterol).

- **Implementation:** FM providers managed the logistics of 'Health Hubs' within office buildings.
- **Finding:** 70% of the workforce were found to be at risk of heart disease due to undiagnosed high blood pressure. Early detection via these FM-led hubs prevented an estimated 15 'cardiovascular events' (strokes/heart attacks) within the first year.

## Academic Support and Evidence

Academic research consistently supports the 'Job-Demand-Control-Support' model. Studies (e.g., *ResearchGate*, 2025) indicate that when FM provides employees with environmental control (e.g., adjustable lighting, thermal comfort), occupational stress, a primary CVD trigger decreases.

'High job strain combined with low environmental control is significantly associated with elevated ambulatory blood pressure.'

— Journal of Occupational Health Psychology

## Recommendations for FM Leaders

1. **Conduct a 'Wellbeing Audit':** Assess the building's 'walkability' and the nutritional value of on-site catering.
2. **Integrate Smart Technology:** Use IoT sensors to ensure IAQ remains optimal, as poor air quality is a direct cardiovascular irritant.
3. **Lead by Example:** FM organisations should implement these changes for their own direct employees (cleaning, maintenance, and security staff) who often face higher physical strain and irregular shifts, increasing their CVD risk.

## Conclusion

For UK FM organisations along with FM clients in 2026, the mandate has shifted from 'maintaining assets' to 'maintaining people'. By adopting a proactive stance on cardiovascular health, FM can transition from a cost centre to a vital value-driver for UK plc.

# Cardiovascular Wellbeing Audit Checklist for Facilities Managers

This checklist is designed for UK-based Facilities Management (FM) professionals to evaluate and improve the impact of the built environment on the cardiovascular health of occupants and staff.

## 1. Physical Activity & Active Design

- **Staircase Accessibility:** Are internal staircases clearly signposted, well-lit, and more "inviting" than the lift lobby?
- **Active Workstations:** What percentage of the desk pool consists of sit-stand desks? Is there a policy for "walking meeting" routes (indoor and outdoor)?
- **End-of-Trip (EoT) Facilities:** Are there secure, dry bike storage racks? Are showers and lockers maintained to a high standard to encourage active commuting?
- **Point-of-Decision Prompts:** Are there motivational signs near lifts/elevators encouraging the use of stairs for heart health?

## 2. Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ)

- **Air Quality Monitoring:** Are CO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and VOC levels monitored in real-time? (High particulate matter is a known cardiovascular irritant).
- **Thermal Comfort:** Can employees adjust local temperatures? Chronic thermal discomfort increases physiological stress and heart rate.
- **Acoustic Management:** Are there dedicated "quiet zones" to mitigate the hypertensive effects of chronic office noise?
- **Lighting Quality:** Is there maximised access to natural daylight? Are LED systems flicker-free and programmed to support circadian rhythms?

## 3. Nutrition & Hydration

- **Catering Standards:** Do on-site canteens follow "Heart-Healthy" procurement (low sodium, zero trans-fats)?
- **Vending Strategy:** Are high-sugar/high-fat snacks replaced with nuts, seeds, and fruit? Is water the most visible/cheapest option?

- **Hydration Points:** Are filtered water stations available within a 30-second walk of any workstation?

#### 4. Direct Employee & Shift Work Support

- **Shift Patterns:** For FM operational staff (security/cleaning), are rotas designed to minimise "social jetlag" and chronic fatigue, which are linked to CVD?
- **Break Areas:** Do staff have access to "Restorative Spaces" with biophilic elements (plants/nature views) to lower cortisol levels during breaks?
- **Occupational Screening:** Are annual blood pressure and cholesterol checks offered on-site for all FM personnel?

#### 5. Smart Building & Tech Integration

- **Occupancy Data:** Is sensor data used to prevent overcrowding (which increases heat and CO<sub>2</sub>)
- **Wellness Apps:** Is the building management system (BMS) integrated with any employee wellness platforms to push "stretch break" reminders?

### Audit Scoring Guide

Score	Status	Action Required
80–100%	<b>Heart-Healthy Exemplar</b>	Maintain and share best practices as a case study.
50–79%	<b>Progressive</b>	Identified gaps in active design or nutrition need addressing.
<b>Below 50%</b>	<b>High Risk</b>	Immediate review of environmental stressors and EoT facilities required.