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The QS People

The QS guide to M&E in the Midlands



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Introduction



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M&E isn't a side package anymore. It's the part of the job that makes or breaks the projects that actually matter. It's where the pressure is, where the money moves quickest, and where things fall apart if they're not handled properly.

Look around the Midlands for example, the projects getting talked about aren't about who laid the most brickwork. They're about whether the services run smoothly. Hospitals, data centres, big infrastructure schemes, they don't stall because of concrete. They stall because the M&E hasn't been costed, coordinated, or controlled the right way. And when that happens, it's the QS who gets pulled into the mess.

That's why I've put this guide together. It's not waffle and it's not another career framework. It's a straight up look at where you need to be focussing if you want to keep ahead as M&E takes centre stage. Inside, you'll see:

- Where the money and pressure are really moving
- Why QS involvement in M&E is now essential
- How to get into service driven projects without waiting five years
- What the best QS's are doing differently right now
- The risks and opportunities shaping 2025 and beyond

If you're a QS in the Midlands and you want to move forward, specialise, or just stop being overlooked for the jobs that matter then this is where you start.

Not a framework. Not a job ad. A reality check.



1. Why this guide matters

Right now, being a QS in the Midlands isn't about whether you can land a role. It's about whether you're in the right role; one that gives you progression, exposure, and the chance to actually influence a project.

The problem is, the market looks busy from the outside but is messy on the inside.

Teams are stretched thin, promises don't always match reality, and too many QS's end up firefighting instead of building their careers. That constant churn makes it hard to know which opportunities are genuinely worth stepping into.

What's shifting is the expectation. Clients aren't just after numbers on a spreadsheet anymore, they want QS's who can step in early, bring clarity, and steer the job commercially before it drifts. Those who get this right are moving faster, getting onto the best projects, and opening doors others don't even see.

This guide matters because it lays out what's really happening behind the headlines, anything from the trends shaping the market, the roles that carry real weight, and the skills that will set you apart over the next few years.

Think of it less as career advice; more as a map.

Let's get into it.

2. The commercial picture

Across the Midlands, M&E is outpacing traditional build, not just in volume, but in how unpredictable it's become. The projects driving the market in 2025 are service led, and the figures tell the story.

Turnover growth: M&E contractors are expecting a 10% jump this year, even with supply chain headaches, regulatory delays, and longer lead times on specialist kit. Demand is strong and still rising.

Labour pressures: a lack of skilled engineers and an ageing workforce are reshaping project planning. Design freezes are happening earlier, prelims are higher, and there's less room for mistakes. Errors now hit harder and much faster.

Inflation and volatility: M&E inflation has eased to around 3.5% for 2025, but don't confuse that with stability. Services are still the biggest commercial risk, with swings in pricing and availability able to wipe out margins mid project.

On top of this, frameworks and clients are shifting responsibility. QS's are now starting to be asked to:

- Dig deeper into risk
- Check design assumptions early
- Manage change proactively, not reactively

This isn't optional anymore.

The QS role has expanded and it's clearest in services.

Simply put: if you're not fully involved in M&E by Stage 3, you're already behind. You're not just missing detail, you're missing the point where projects are won or lost.



3. What's changing on the ground...

The Midlands' M&E scene isn't just growing, it's evolving fast, and the way projects are delivered is shifting under our feet. Here's what we're seeing:

Early design freezes: with skilled labour in short supply, contractors are locking designs sooner to avoid costly rework later. Decisions that used to happen at Stage 4 are now happening at Stage 2 or 3.

Higher prelims and risk buffers: projects are budgeting more for programmes, logistics, and contingency. With volatility so high, nobody wants to be caught out.

Specialist kit delays: long lead times for mechanical and electrical equipment are forcing planners to adjust timelines, reorder sequences, and sometimes even redesign parts of a project just to keep momentum.

Integrated teams: QS's, designers, and contractors are working closer than ever. Collaboration isn't optional; it's becoming a survival skill. The best teams share data early, challenge assumptions together, and tackle risks before they become problems.

Pricing pressure: even with M&E inflation stabilising, margins are fragile. Small miscalculations in design or supply can have a disproportionate impact on profitability.

Labour challenges: ageing workforces and fewer engineers mean resourcing is a constant headache. Project teams are relying more on flexible staffing models, subcontractor pools, and early recruitment to stay on track.

Simply put: the way services projects are delivered in 2025 demands more foresight, more coordination, and sharper QS intervention than ever before.

Now is the time to get involved!



4. Where is the work?

If you want long term commercial security, follow the M&E work. It's no longer just London towers or flagship hospitals. Services are now at the heart of almost every high value, high risk project right across the whole of the Midlands.

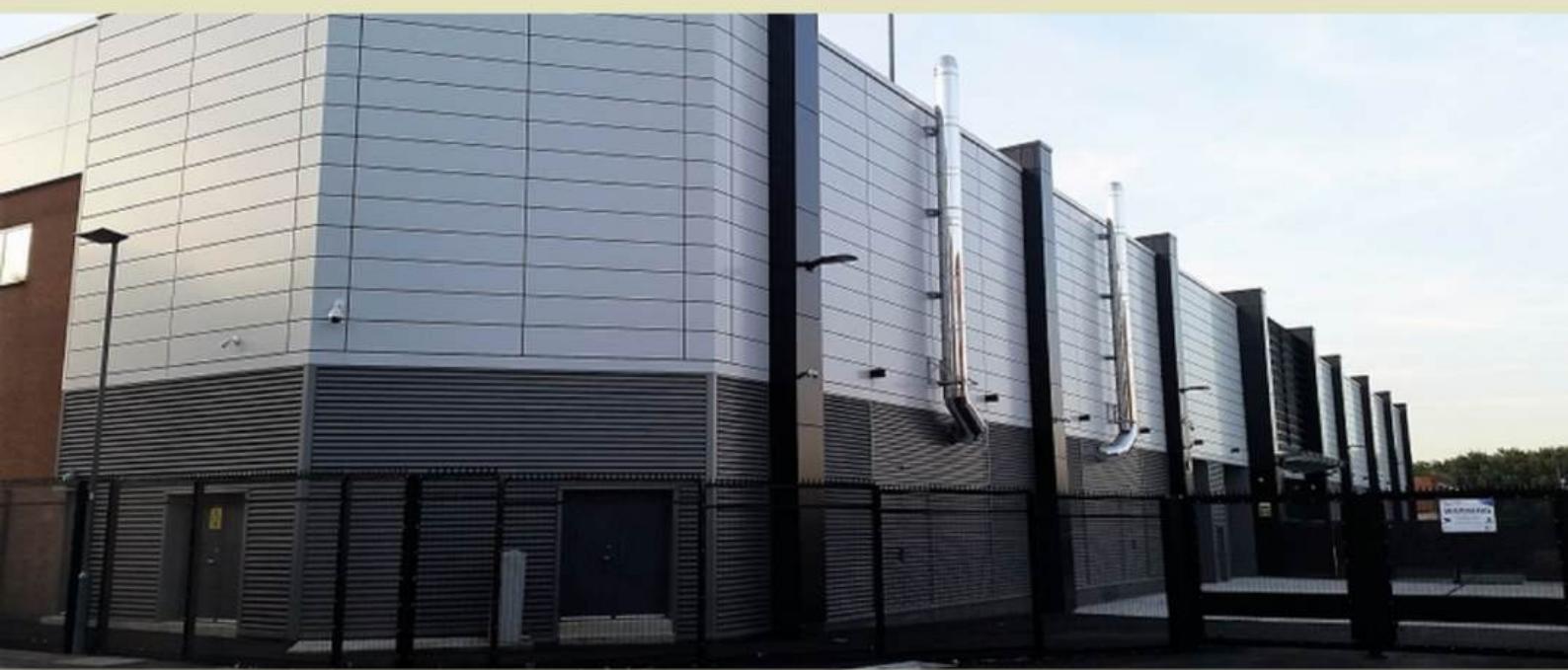
Key sectors driving M&E demand:

- **Data centres:** fast track builds, tier certification, and cooling resilience mean services are the critical package. Getting commercial clarity from day one is non-negotiable.
- **Life sciences and labs:** success hinges on tight services integration. Poor scope or late stage design changes can derail programmes. QS's who get compliance and validation sequencing are in serious demand.
- **Public sector retrofits:** schools, hospitals, and council frameworks are pushing decarbonisation. That means complex M&E overlays into existing buildings, often with minimal documentation and fixed deadlines.
- **Infrastructure upgrades:** EV charging, transport hubs, and hybrid energy schemes layer civils with specialist services. Experience in general contracting here is a fast track into high spec M&E work.

Emerging hotspots:

- Birmingham, Leicester, and Nottingham are seeing a spike in retrofit and research led projects.
- Campus style and mixed use redevelopments are scaling services scopes from the start, and no longer an afterthought.

Clients are watching closely. The services scope is where programmes either fail or succeed. The QS who owns that interface early is the one who becomes indispensable.



5. How to get in (or stay ahead)

Say it loud

You won't get the brief if no one knows you want it. M&E exposure doesn't fall in your lap, you've got to go after it, make it clear in your reviews, underline it in interviews, drop it into the day to day conversations, even mention it in passing in the corridor so there's no doubt about where you want to head.

Stand closer to the fire

Sit in design meetings. Shadow services subcontractors. Volunteer for the messy jobs: change control, procurement sequencing, and value engineering. The more you see, the more you'll learn, and the quicker you'll start spotting the patterns, the pressure points, and the commercial angles that separate a QS who just tracks numbers from one who actually shapes the outcome of a project.

Build your own education

No one hands you M&E knowledge. You earn it. Start with the basics, read the service specs, get familiar with drawings, and break down the prelims so you understand where the costs are coming from. Pay attention to how building services change the programme, the logistics, and the sequencing and don't be afraid to ask the engineers why those choices matter and what happens when they're missed. That's how you actually build the knowledge.

Get intentional

Position yourself. Next time the topic comes up, say something like: "I haven't run an M&E package yet, but I've taken the time to understand how the sequencing works, I know where the risks sit, and I'm ready to take one on. I want the exposure, I'm prepared to step up, and I'll put the work in to make sure I get it right."



6. The toolkit

Stepping into M&E can feel like stepping into a different language: new systems, new risks, new ways of working. That's why asking the right questions isn't just "good practice", it's essential.

Questions do four things:

- **Show you're switched on:** even if you don't have all the answers yet, the fact you're asking proves you're thinking ahead.
- **Close knowledge gaps:** the earlier you spot what you don't know, the quicker you can learn and adapt.
- **Build respect:** managers will value a QS who takes the time to understand how things fit together rather than one who just nods along.
- **Learn the bigger picture:** M&E links into almost every other package, so understanding it helps you see how the whole job comes together.

No one expects you to know everything from day one. But they will expect you to show curiosity, challenge where something doesn't make sense, and look beyond just the numbers.

The questions in this section are designed to help you do exactly that, give you a framework to open up conversations, spot risks, and show that you're serious about making M&E your strength.

Ask these questions:

About the role and team:

- What does a typical M&E package look like here in terms of size, scope, and value?
- Where does the commercial team add the most value on services projects?
- What are the biggest pinch points you want a QS to manage day to day?

About risk and delivery:

- Where do you see projects go wrong most often in services?
- What are the common risks I should be looking out for early on?
- How does change control normally get handled on M&E here?

About learning and development:

- What's the fastest way for someone like me, coming from build, to get up the curve on services?
- Are there particular engineers or subcontractors you'd recommend I shadow early on?
- What resources or training would you point me towards to build confidence quickly?

About collaboration and expectation:

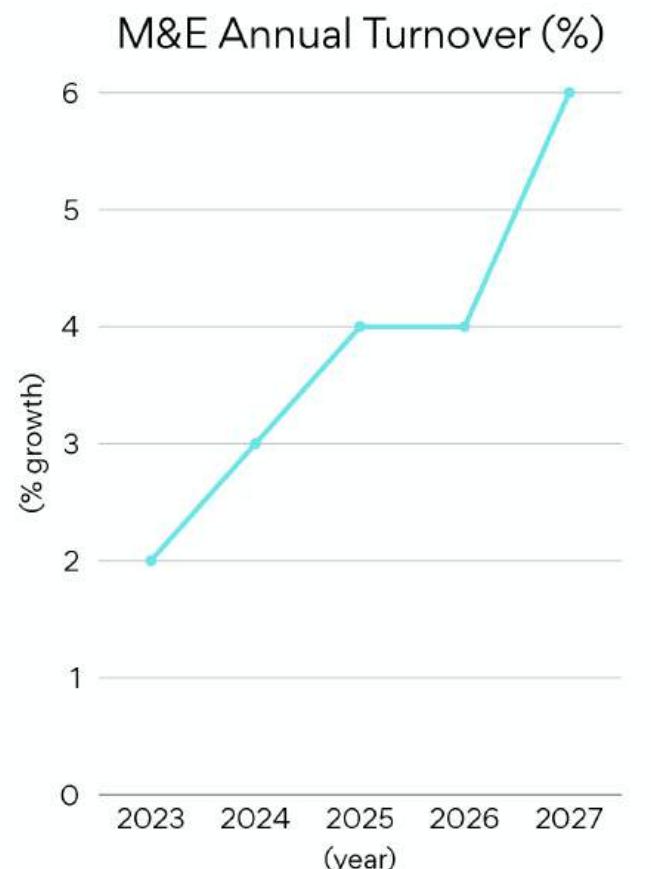
- How do you like QS's to work with design teams and engineers on sequencing decisions?
- What does "good" look like in an M&E QS from your perspective?
- If I'm in this role six months from now, what would you want to see me have?



7. What's next?

The next 18 months are going to be a turning point for commercial people in M&E. Here's what's on the horizon and why it matters:

- **Risks are moving earlier:** clients want cost certainty sooner. That means things like scope, design checks and change assumptions need to be pinned down at RIBA Stage 2-3. If you're not involved early, you'll miss the chance altogether
- **Rules are tightening:** net zero targets and new building safety laws are landing straight in M&E. Expect closer checks on insulation, fire systems and commissioning.
- **M&E is shaping the programme:** with more modular and retrofit jobs, services aren't an add-on anymore, they're the driver. They dictate phasing, access and enabling works.
- **Leadership roles are shifting:** QS's who can talk confidently about M&E strategy and risks are being pushed into client-facing positions, even if their background is contracting. Being able to explain services clearly is now a boardroom skill.



This isn't just a steady change. It's a real shift in power. The people who adapt fastest won't just land stronger projects, they'll move up the ladder quicker too. So don't just see this as a line on a graph. See it as a signpost.

8. Salary & role forecast

The outlook for commercial roles in M&E is being shaped by more than just pay packets. Market forces, regulation, and skill demand are all influencing how responsibilities evolve and how attractive these positions become.

1. Demand-led progression

With M&E continuing to outpace traditional build, commercial teams are finding themselves under pressure to adapt faster. Quantity Surveyors and Commercial Managers who can manage complex packages, interface with design, and understand compliance are in line for accelerated career progression.

2. The skills premium

While we're not talking numbers, it's clear that professionals who bring niche expertise, whether in sustainability, digital tools, or regulatory frameworks, are positioning themselves at the higher end of the market. Employers are competing for people who can bring more than the basics.

3. Hybrid influence

Flexibility is becoming a differentiator. Companies that offer hybrid models, compressed hours, or project-based autonomy are finding it easier to attract and retain strong commercial talent. The package is no longer just financial. Work life balance is part of the deal.

4. Future facing roles

Expect to see a shift in responsibilities. Data management, contract strategy, and early stage project influence are all becoming standard parts of the role. Tomorrow's M&E commercial leaders won't just be number crunchers, they'll be strategic decision makers. Forecast in a line: The roles will continue to evolve, and those who adapt their skillset to where the industry is heading will stay in demand, regardless of the salary conversation.

Want updated salary data?

Contact us and we'd be happy to give you our latest data and projections. Details are at the end of this guide.

9. Hidden opportunities

You won't read this in a job description. But if you're paying attention, it's clear: M&E is where tomorrow's commercial leaders are coming from. It's where the biggest risks, the tightest margins, and the most innovation are landing first.

Those who lean into it now won't just get more opportunities, they'll shape how projects are delivered, how clients make decisions, and how commercial strategy is defined in the years ahead.

Ignore it, and you'll be left chasing roles that feel safe today but offer little tomorrow. Step into it, and you'll put yourself in the rooms where the future of construction is being decided.

Clean tech fit-outs.

Labs, data centres and net zero retrofits. Most of these firms don't have the M&E strength in house, so if you've got even a bit of services knowledge, you're instantly useful.

Tier 1's building M&E teams.

Main contractors want more control, less risk, and better margins. If you can speak both commercial and technical, you'll get noticed quickly.

Developer led infrastructure.

Energy led housing, EV hubs and smart building upgrades are bringing M&E in from the very start. This is where civils and services are blending.

Hospitals and life sciences.

Major investment is flowing into healthcare and research facilities. These jobs are services heavy, which makes M&E knowledge a big differentiator.

Retrofit at scale.

From schools to social housing, retrofit is only getting bigger. Services are at the heart of it, and QS's who can manage cost and compliance here will be in high demand.



Final word

Every QS knows they should be closer to M&E. But very few are taking the steps. Why? Because it feels technical. It feels risky. It feels like you're starting from scratch.

But here's the truth:

- No one was 'ready' when they started.
- Most hiring managers aren't looking for experts; they're looking for intent.
- The jobs with real impact, margin, and complexity are moving into services. Quickly.

So ask yourself this:

Do you want to keep circling safe roles? Or do you want to lead scopes that actually matter?

Because the next wave of commercial leaders won't be the ones who stayed comfortable. They'll be the ones who leaned into the hard stuff, asked questions others were afraid to, and put themselves in the middle of the work that really drives a project.

There's no permission slip coming. Just the opportunity, if you take it. And in a few years' time, the QS's who made that move will be the ones sitting in the top jobs, shaping strategy, not chasing it.

If you'd like any more information surrounding how to get into M&E, feel free to reach out via telephone, email or LinkedIn.

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