

PROSPECTS

# Early Careers Survey 2018



Job hunting, work experience,  
apprenticeships and further study  
told by school and university students,  
graduates and postgraduates

PROSPECTS  
**Luminate**

# Welcome

How do students approach job hunting? What information do they need? What about use of technology? How valuable is work experience? What are their views on the jobs market? What are they considering when it comes to apprenticeships or further study?

By answering these questions and more, we hope to better inform employers, recruiters, careers advisers, and anyone involved in supporting and developing those taking their first steps on their career journey.

Our Early Careers Survey, in collaboration with Enhance Media, received 8,320 completed

responses in January 2018. This report analyses data by stage of career journey, from school and university students to graduates and postgraduates.

We hope that you enjoy our snapshot of early attitudes and intentions towards job hunting and careers.

Jayne Rowley, Chief Executive, Prospects

## EARLY CAREERS SURVEY 2018

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## Inside

### School and college students

Job hunting / Work experience / Apprenticeships / University

### University students

Job hunting / Work experience / Further study

### Graduates and postgraduates

Job hunting / Work experience



# School and college students

A total of 1,450 GCSE, sixth form and college students took part in the survey. The majority of respondents were female (70.4%) and aged 18 or below (93%).

## JOB HUNTING

A large proportion of respondents were looking for some form of work. More than half were looking for a permanent job, while 8.6% were seeking temporary work.

### Where do school and college students look for information and opportunities?

Three quarters used search engines to find jobs and research employers. GCSE and college students appear to prefer general websites (48.1%) to specialist (33.7%) and industry specific sites (17.9%). One in ten used recruitment agencies while 9.2% scanned newspapers and magazines.

This group also found social media (40.5%), networking and word of mouth (40.5%), careers fairs (39.7%) and careers services (34.5%) useful when searching for jobs and careers advice.

Social media was used by 43.5% of students to search for a job or find career advice and information. When searching for jobs and researching employers on social media, school and college students prefer to use Facebook (21.2%), Instagram (13.5%) and YouTube (12%).

Careers events can be a good way for students to find employers and opportunities in specific industries and seek careers advice. When asked about particular resources/events used for job hunting, the following were considered most useful:

- careers websites (53.0%)
- sixth form/college organised work experience (50.7%)
- university fairs (49.8%)
- talks from employers (46.0%).

### Information preferences

This group prefer job and company information presented as text and articles (78.8%), images and photographs (51.9%) and short videos (44.3%). When looking for a new job or company to work for, students found the following information most important:

- salaries (75.2%)
- types of work (61%)
- location (57.9%)
- work environments (51.6%)
- training opportunities (49%)
- benefits and rewards (47.8%).

### Use of technology

Three in five used their mobile phone or tablet for email job alerts. A significant proportion of undergraduates have directly applied for a job on these devices (41.5%), although 40.6% saved jobs to apply later on a computer.

Advances in automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are shaping the way businesses recruit. Chatbots are computer programs that can have a conversation using AI. When looking for a new job or company to work for, around one in five (19.3%) stated they would be useful.

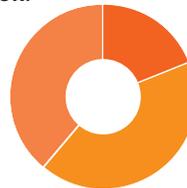
### Views of jobs and the labour market

This group view the labour market as competitive (63.9%), but less so than their undergraduate and postgraduate counterparts. The majority of respondents (54.2%) would consider relocating for a new job.

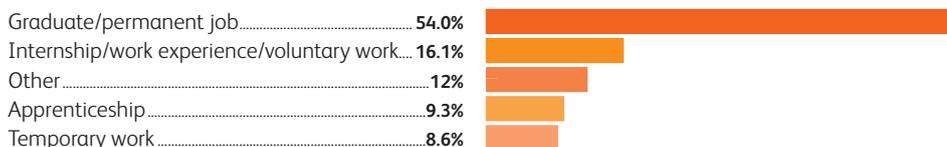
Small and medium-sized enterprises appear to be a popular choice for those who stated a preference for employer size, with 81% wishing to work for one. However, a large proportion (45.1%) did not state a preference.

#### WHAT SIZE OF EMPLOYER WOULD YOU PREFER TO WORK FOR?

- 19.0% Large (250+ employees)
- 42.2% Medium (50-249 employees)
- 38.8% Small (1-49 employees)



#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST FITS WHAT YOU ARE/ WOULD BE LOOKING FOR?



### Is there any information you have struggled to find when looking for a job?

*'Information regarding salaries and career prospects.'*

*'What age you have to be to work at the particular job.'*

*'The subjects worth taking for a specific career from GCSE to A-level to uni course.'*

### What is it that appeals to you about an SME?

*'I feel like a smaller one would be much more of a tight-knit little community, and everyone would be like a family.'*

*'Because the managers/boss will recognise how well you have worked and there is a greater chance of being promoted.'*

*'We can interact easily. We find more time to discuss business issues with the manager and not his/her PA. Manager is able to control and see how his/ her employees are working.'*

*'Still part of a team, but not too large that I am just another number. Smaller = more responsibility.'*

# School and college students

## WORK EXPERIENCE

The *ISE Development Survey 2018* revealed a decline in the number of younger people taking work experience. Only 21% of 16 to 17-year-olds were in employment during secondary school in 2017, compared with 42% in 1997, which is a potential issue for consideration.

Prospects' survey found that around half (50.3%) of school and college students had some form of work experience, although sixth form/college students were 31 percentage points more likely to have work experience than GCSE students.

The duration of their work experience was often less than a month (75.7%). Only 24.3% worked for at least a month.

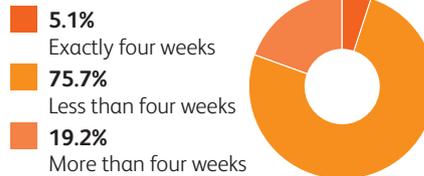
Unpaid work experience continues to be rife with 87.7% reporting that they had worked unpaid at some point. Those who were unpaid often worked for less than four weeks (81.7%), with a small proportion working exactly four weeks (3.5%) or over a month (14.9%).

One reason that unpaid work experience remains common among this group is that many school and college students undertake a short mandatory work experience as part of their studies.

This group was most likely to feel that their work experience was not valuable for their career progression. On a scale of one to ten (where one is not valuable and ten is extremely valuable) 42.4% gave a rating of 7-10. The median figure was five.

Those who worked for longer than a month were more likely to state their experience was valuable (64.4% gave a rating of 7-10), suggesting that length of experience slightly impacts value.

### HOW LONG WAS YOUR INTERNSHIP OR WORK EXPERIENCE?



## APPRENTICESHIPS

While 9.3% of school and college students were actively looking for an apprenticeship, 45.1% stated they would consider doing one. The number of apprenticeships rose by 19% in 2017 and with the government's plan to create three million apprentices by 2020 we could see more people considering this pathway into a career.

The most popular resources used to find an apprenticeship were:

- the internet (83.5%)
- teachers at schools, colleges and universities (74.7%)
- talking to current or past apprentices (60.1%).

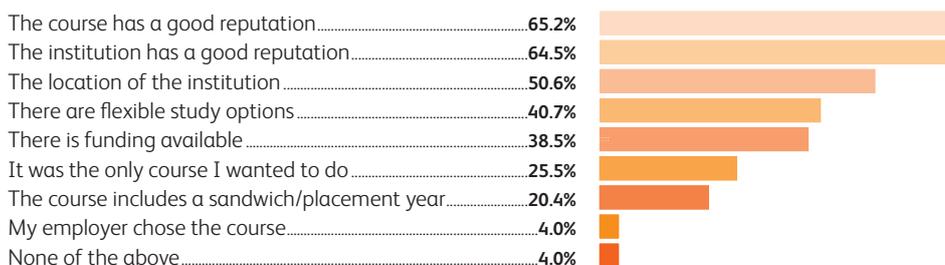
When asked what type of apprenticeship they would like to do, the most common responses (from those who stated a preference) were a degree (38.4%) or higher apprenticeship (29.6%). However, many did not know which apprenticeship they would pursue (42.7%).

## UNIVERSITY

School and college students demonstrated a strong preference for continuing their education, with 85.4% considering doing a degree.

The most important factors considered when searching for a degree were course and institution reputation.

### WHEN LOOKING FOR A DEGREE COURSE, WHAT ASPECTS ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?



### Sixth form students: why did you do an internship or work experience that was unpaid?

*'For experience to know if the area was something that I was interested in and unpaid is more available than paid.'*

*'I am more interested in experience than money.'*

*'To gain experience and actually get something out of work for myself rather than just doing it for the money.'*

### Why would you consider looking for an apprenticeship?

*'A longer time to collect knowledge and a safe place to learn under someone's guidance.'*

*'Because it is a good way to learn about the job you're doing while doing it and getting paid. It can also mean you move up in that place of work quicker if you decide to stay after the apprenticeship is done.'*

*'Because you have no overhanging debt at the end of your work placement while also ending with a degree.'*

*'It would be an educational and eye-opening opportunity to experience life in the workplace, and will help me in my decision of a future career while receiving funds.'*

# University students

A total of 2,460 undergraduate students responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were female (68%) and aged 24 or under (87%). The majority (89.2%) of respondents expected to achieve a degree grade of 2:1 or higher. However, the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) 2016 data shows that, in fact, only two thirds of graduates received these grades. Males were five percentage points more likely to expect a first or a 2:1 than women.

## JOB HUNTING

A large proportion of respondents were looking for some form of work. More than half of the respondents were looking for a permanent job while 11.3% were seeking temporary work.

### Where do university students look for information and opportunities?

Search engines (67.5%) and general job websites (57.7%) were the most popular resources used by undergraduates to find jobs and employers. Specialist (49%) and industry specific (28.3%) websites were also used, along with recruitment agencies (17%), and newspapers and magazines (13.6%).

Undergraduates also found networking and word of mouth (44.8%) the most valuable when searching for jobs and finding careers advice and information. Other useful resources included careers fairs (44.3%), social media (38.8%) and careers services (36.9%).

The main social media sites used to search for jobs or research employers were LinkedIn (32.1%) and Facebook (24.3%).

### Information preferences

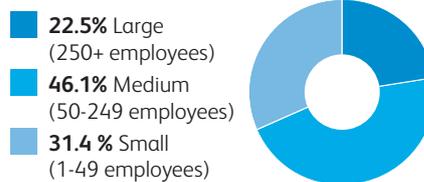
Information on jobs and companies that was presented as text and articles (79.8%), images (49.4%) and short videos (43.5%) was seen as most useful. When looking for a new job or company to work for, undergraduates found the following information useful:

- salaries (71%)
- location (60.2%)
- types of work (60%)
- training opportunities (53.7%)
- benefits and rewards (46.4%)

### Use of technology

A large proportion used a mobile or tablet when searching for a job to check email job alerts (67.6%)

### WHAT SIZE OF EMPLOYER WOULD YOU PREFER TO WORK FOR?



or to search job boards directly (47.5%). Some used these devices to apply for jobs (41.8%), although 44.6% saved the job to apply later on a computer.

Chatbots are computer programs that can have a conversation using artificial intelligence. When looking for a new job or company to work for, around one in five stated they would be useful.

### Views of jobs and the labour market

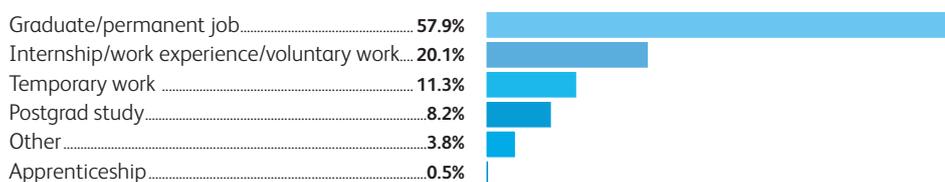
The labour market was viewed as extremely competitive by most undergraduates with 80.2% giving a rating of 7-10 (on a scale where one is not competitive and ten is very competitive).

The majority of students expect to earn at least the average graduate starting salary (£21,776) and 17.2% expect to be earning £30,000 or more.

70% of undergraduates are willing to relocate for a job - more so than for postgraduate study. However, the reality is quite different. The Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data shows that graduates are, in fact, not very mobile.

Of those who expressed a preference of the size of employer, the majority would prefer to work for an SME. Only a small minority wanted to work for a large company, despite the fact that graduate training schemes are often associated with larger businesses. A significant proportion did not state a preference for employer size.

### WHAT BEST DESCRIBES WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?



### Is there any information you have struggled to find when looking for a new job?

*'A defined salary, as most offer a 'competitive salary'. Often determined during the interview process.'*

*'Ethical/environmental standards. Information deeper than 'we value diversity', without explanation of what that entails.'*

*'Exact salary of the job, other benefits of the job (non-salary), career progression, specific details of what the job entails.'*

*'Intern reviews and accounts of their experiences in the role, as well as their journeys in the application cycle as most firms seem to focus on sharing insights from graduate roles.'*

### What is it that appeals to you about an SME?

*'Easier to create relationships and makes for a comfortable work environment. Enough of a culture/lots of different people to meet but not too big that you're irrelevant and part of a faceless entity.'*

*'Especially for a recent graduate in an entry-level job, a smaller employer provides a more intimate learning experience and more guidance.'*

*'They would know you as a name rather than a number. You would be recognised and valued.'*

*'I believe there is more room for growth in smaller companies, such as room for expansion, room for more responsibilities etc.'*

# University students

## WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience is important to ensure students are prepared for their transition from education into the workplace, although the percentage of young people engaging in placements is declining (as evidenced in the 'school and college student' section of this report).

While less than half (39%) of our undergraduate respondents had some form of work experience, it is encouraging to see that of those who did, 62.4% had at least a month.

Prospects survey found that:

- nearly half of undergraduates undertook part-time work not related to their course
- a third had relevant work experience lasting less than six months
- 1 in 8 gained work experience from a sandwich year or internship
- 16% had full-time work unrelated to their studies.

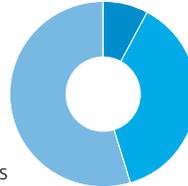
The majority (64%) reported that they had worked unpaid at some point. Nearly half (41.4%) of those who undertook unpaid work experience or an internship had worked for more than four weeks.

Respondents were asked how valuable they found their internship or work experience for career progression on a scale of one to ten, with one being not valuable and ten being extremely valuable. It is positive that the majority of graduates found their work experience useful, with a median score of seven.

Only 17% did not think their work experience was particularly valuable for their career progression, although these respondents often took work experience not related to their studies. Those who had undertaken work experience lasting more than four weeks found it more valuable than those who had a month or less.

### HOW LONG WAS YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE?

- 7.8% Exactly four weeks
- 37.6% Less than four weeks
- 54.6% More than four weeks



Students who had undertaken paid work found it more valuable (median score eight) than those who had worked unpaid (median score seven). This could indicate that paid work experience was seen as more valuable, however, graduates who took paid work also tended to be employed for a longer period of time. It appears as though length of placements could influence how valuable work experience is.

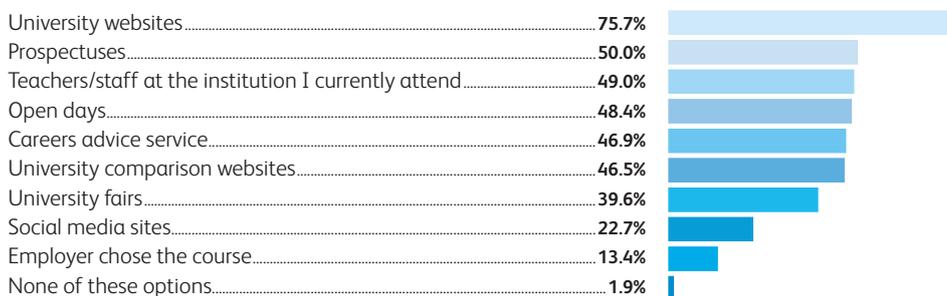
## FURTHER STUDY

While 8.2% said that they were actively exploring further study options, 65% said they would consider it.

University websites were the most common resource undergraduates used to find postgraduate courses, while fewer graduates used social media to find a postgraduate course. A heavy focus on social media might not be the most efficient use of an institution's resources. Prospects' study found that:

- the majority view funding as an important aspect when considering postgraduate study
- graduates want to study at an institution with a good reputation
- half regarded location as an important factor
- 40% wanted flexible study options
- 59% would consider relocating for further study.

### WHAT METHODS WOULD YOU USE TO FIND A POSTGRADUATE COURSE?



### Why did you do an internship or work experience that was unpaid?

'As I needed the experience no matter what, it didn't matter I wasn't paid as the experience was more valuable.'

'To gain experience and knowledge into the field of work I want to go into.'

'I needed to gain experience in a relevant field and I did not receive any paid offers.'

'To improve my chances of getting a paid job'.

### Is there any information you have struggled to find about postgraduate study?

'Application fee and offer deposit fee are hard to find on each university website. For some you have to make an application before finding out the costs involved. Funding options are hard to understand and require a significant amount of time to find. Details about what you can do with the Masters or PhD after the course and whether the course is accredited or well-respected in the field.'

'How different postgraduate study is compared to undergraduate (in terms of structure and workload). Also how much more it would benefit my employability compared to having a undergraduate degree on its own.'

'I think it would be interesting to know the advantages/disadvantages of pursuing postgraduate study versus going straight into a grad scheme straight after graduating.'

'Many universities seem to have very broad sounding entry requirements. I would like to know what specific qualifications are required so I can be sure it suits me.'

# Graduates and postgraduates

A total of 4,410 currently employed and unemployed graduates with a first-degree, Masters, Doctorate or MBA qualification completed the survey. The majority of respondents were female (62.8%). The most common age range was 25 to 34 (39.1%), although a considerable proportion were aged 35 and over (27.9%), and 24 and under (33.0%).

## JOB HUNTING

Prospects' survey found that a large proportion of respondents were looking for some form of work, mainly a permanent job.

### Where do graduates and postgraduates look for information and opportunities?

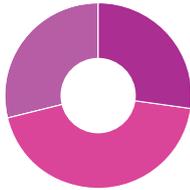
General job websites (64.1%) were the most popular resource used by graduates and postgraduates when searching for jobs and employers. Search engines (59.9%), specialist (49.8%) and industry (40.6%) websites were also commonly used as were recruitment agencies (31.1%), and newspapers and magazines (18.4%).

When searching for a job or finding careers advice and information, graduates and postgraduates found networking (48.9%) and social media (38.8%) the most helpful. A smaller proportion of individuals also found direct approaches to employers (28.6%), and careers fairs and exhibitions (25.6%) useful.

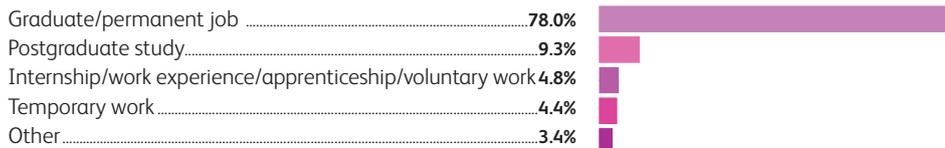
LinkedIn (47.1%) and Facebook (24.3%) were the most common social media site used to search for jobs or research employers.

### WHAT SIZE OF EMPLOYER WOULD YOU PREFER TO WORK FOR?

- 27.3% Large (250+ employees)
- 44% Medium (50-249 employees)
- 28.6% Small (1-49 employees)



### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST FITS WHAT YOU ARE/ WOULD BE LOOKING FOR?



### Information preferences

Graduates and postgraduates prefer information about jobs and companies when presented as written text and articles (80.6%). Some also found audio and podcasts (67.2%), and imagery and photography (42.3%) valuable.

The most useful information when looking for new job or company was:

- salary (69.7%)
- locations (58.6%)
- types of work (55.9%)
- training opportunities (55.6%)
- benefits and rewards (46.4%).

### Use of technology

When searching for jobs most graduates and postgraduates used a mobile or tablet to check email job alerts (71.7%). Nearly half searched job boards directly on these devices, and 46.1% applied for a job using a mobile or tablet.

A fifth (19.4%) said they would find a chatbot useful when looking for a new company to work for.

### Views of jobs and the labour market

Graduates and postgraduates view the labour market as extremely competitive, with 80.3% giving it a rating of 7-10 (on a scale where one is competitive and ten is very competitive) - more so than any other group.

They were less willing to relocate for a job than their undergraduate counterparts by 9.3 percentage points.

Of those who stated a preference for employer size, the majority would prefer to work for an SME (73%).



### Is there any information you have struggled to find when looking for a job?

*'Salary, training and development opportunities, company culture, non-monetary benefits, specified hours of work.'*

*'Sometimes pay or work hours are not clear enough. I don't want to have to wait for the interview to know the potential salary.'*

*'Equality and diversity strategy and compliance, e.g. proportion of employees from different backgrounds, company policy on equal pay, etc.'*

*'Sometimes ads can be a bit vague about location.'*

### What is it that appeals to you about an SME?

*'Being noticed and valued individually. You're not just a number.'*

*'Easier to get to know people, can help for developing teams. Often more interaction between different areas of the business.'*

*'Easier to communicate with employee/employer. Feel more valued in a smaller business than getting lost in a huge corporation.'*

*'More personal, more opportunity for responsibility and quick development.'*

# Graduates and postgraduates

## WORK EXPERIENCE

We asked those with a first degree or postgraduate qualification whether they had gained any work experience since graduating. The survey found that 44.1% had undertaken an internship or work experience after graduation.

The duration of work experience for this group tends to be longer than that of undergraduates and GCSE/college students, with 77.8% working for more than four weeks.

A large proportion of respondents (30%) worked unpaid at some point, and 64.3% of those had worked for more than four weeks. When asked about unpaid internships, just over two fifths of respondents believe that they should not exist.

Paid work was considered more valuable than unpaid work. When asked to rate how valuable their work experience was on a scale of one to ten (where one was not valuable and ten was extremely valuable) 71% of those with paid work experience gave a rating of 7-10, compared with 52.8% for those who were unpaid.

### HOW LONG WAS YOUR INTERNSHIP OR WORK EXPERIENCE?

- 8.1%**  
Exactly four weeks
- 14.1%**  
Less than four weeks
- 77.8%**  
More than four weeks



**Why did you do an internship or work experience that was unpaid?**

*'Because I felt that in a competitive climate, it was more important to have experience on my CV rather than have steady income in a field that wasn't of interest or related to my degree.'*

*'I did a couple of unpaid photoshoots that would guarantee me experience, a worthy portfolio piece and lead to further paid work. In my case these things did happen, but I would never work unpaid again unless it was a rare one off and amazing opportunity that leads to more paid work.'*

*'I thought the experience gained from completing the internship would far outweigh any monetary reimbursement, since I knew I would gain confidence and some foreign language skills to set me up for the future.'*

*'Because it was in scientific research and it is difficult to get paid work experience in that field.'*

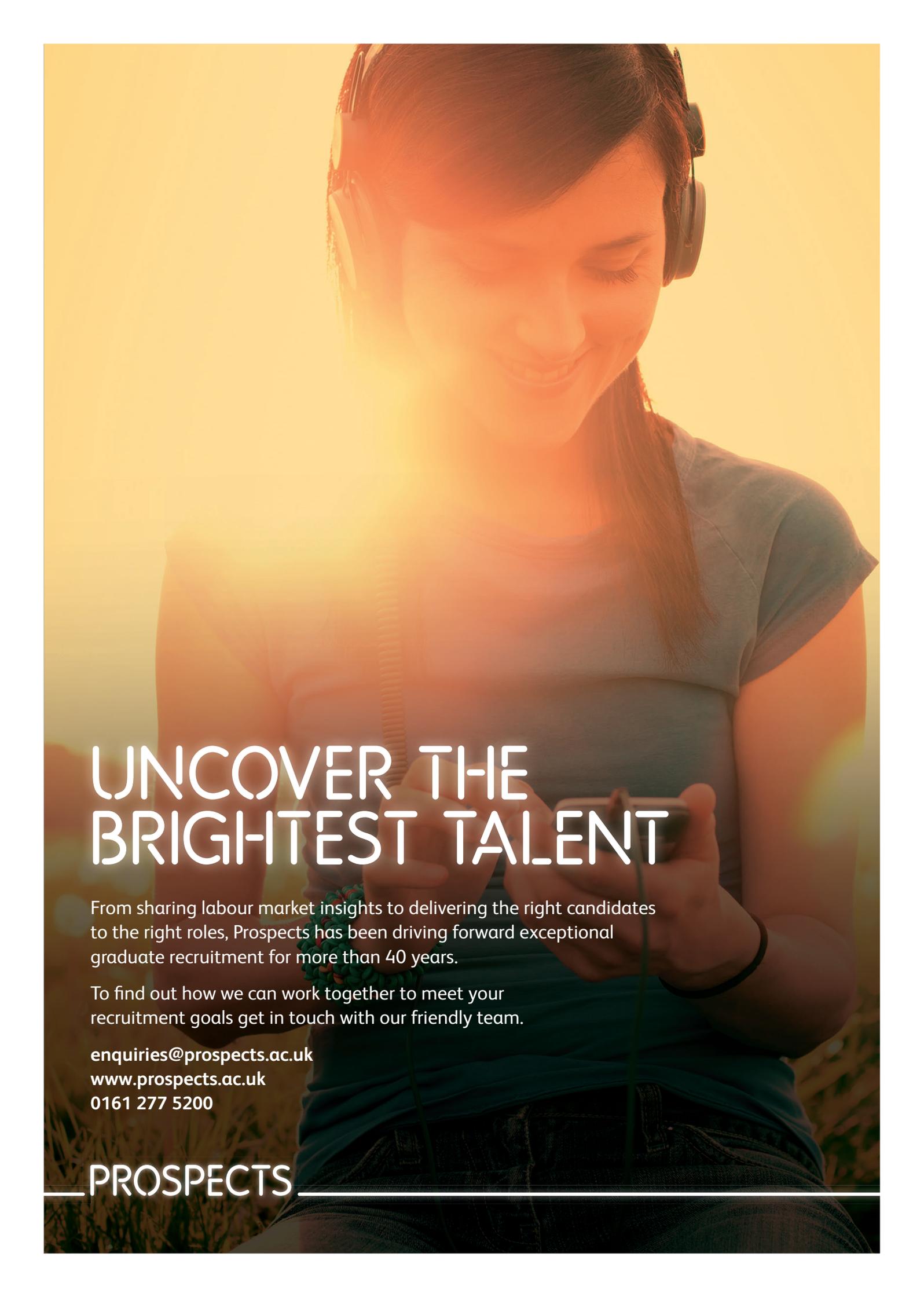
## PROSPECTS Luminate

A fresh voice for the sector

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Luminate is aimed at careers advisors, recruiters, employers and anyone interested in labour market information.

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To find out how we can work together to meet your recruitment goals get in touch with our friendly team.

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