

2021

# impact report 2020

WORKING TOWARDS A  
WORLD WITHOUT SLAVERY

What we're  
achieving together





# we make a difference by...

## 1. supporting

We provide direct survivor support services to men and women through our emergency safehouse accommodation and outreach services.

## 2. educating & informing

We provide accredited training, advice and resources to business and statutory agencies such as the police, local government and NHS.

## 3. influencing

We influence systemic change, working closely with the UK and overseas governments.

# together we will end slavery for good

# welcome to your 2020 impact report



What an extraordinary year 2020 was for all of us. But the pandemic did not mean an end to the cruel exploitation of human beings. Despite the uncertainties and disruption, the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline remained open throughout 2020, as we moved to remote working without missing a single call for support.

With opportunities for exploitation diminishing in 2020 because of the lockdowns, we saw fewer overall victims of modern slavery reported to the Helpline compared to 2019. Given that in all the previous years we recorded an annual increase in victims, we are sure that there are many more out there and are concerned about where they currently are, and in what circumstances they find themselves.

As with our Helpline, Unseen’s outstanding frontline teams continued to deliver services to survivors of modern slavery despite the pandemic. Staff had to be innovative in delivering Covid-19-secure support, ensuring that continuity of care remained despite concerns for their health and that of survivors. Unseen has had zero cases of Covid-19 among our staff and our survivors.

Work with the business community grew apace this year. Unseen welcomed more businesses to our Business Portal service, providing them with the vital information they need to tackle potential exploitation in their operations and supply chains, and to support affected workers.

Andrew Wallis OBE  
unseen CEO

Unseen’s training, consultation and support of the business community is highly regarded and is transforming how companies tackle these issues. The importance of supply chain transparency came to prominence in 2020 with exploitation discovered in the production of PPE equipment in Malaysia, the persecution of Uighurs in Chinese factories and the Leicester scandal in the fast fashion industry. Unseen was actively engaged in efforts to tackle all these issues.

Awareness and training remain key components in how Unseen equips wider society to recognise and report suspected slavery. Again, colleagues rose to the challenge of the pandemic and rapidly moved our services online, ensuring we could continue to educate and inform.

Covid-19 illustrated how our services have never been more needed, at a time when we faced unprecedented concerns, not least around funding and the lack of Government support for the third sector. We are very grateful to our supporters, who significantly stepped up their support of Unseen and stood with us throughout this time. We ended the year in a healthy financial position but exhausted after a year of multiple changes and so much uncertainty.

Together with my colleagues and you, our remarkable supporters, we are an exceptional team working towards a world without slavery. We cannot do it without you, and I hope this Impact Report highlights and inspires you with the progress we made despite everything that Covid-19 threw at us.

## 2020 in numbers

**122**

People supported across our safehouses and outreach services – more than any other year

**10%**

The number of calls to our Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline concerning children, up from 7% the previous year

**8,000**

Nearly 8,000 contacts (by phone, email and via our app) to the Helpline, from victims, professionals, business and members of the public

**3,481**

Potential victims indicated because of contacts to our Helpline. Tens of thousands more are still out there

**25%**

Increase in reports of sexual exploitation to our Helpline

**42%**

Increase in reports of criminal exploitation to our Helpline. Criminal exploitation includes County Lines and other drugs-related activity, forced shoplifting, and forced begging



# supporting survivors in the pandemic



Our approach to fighting modern slavery is to tackle it from all sides – both the causes and the symptoms. We provide specialist care for survivors of trafficking and exploitation, including emergency safehouse accommodation and outreach support, to rebuild safe and productive lives in the community.

Lockdown had a particular resonance for many of the survivors we work with, as they have escaped a form of lockdown in their exploitation. For some, the pandemic brought with it an added impact on their wellbeing and mental health.





## SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

# unseen's safehouses

It's nine years since we opened our first safehouse for women, and five years since we followed this by opening a safehouse for men. During this time, our specially trained staff have supported 243 survivors, most of whom will have experienced terrible suffering.

Take Meena\*, who was married at 13 and trafficked to the UK by her abusive husband. She arrived at our safehouse having experienced years of sexual exploitation and having been regularly beaten and drugged – so much so that a lot of the time, she says, she was not sure what was happening to her.

Or Jon\*, who had been involved in County Lines drug trafficking and came to us after having been stabbed by one of the gang members controlling him.

Even with Covid-19 raging, we're proud that we maintained our essential services at pre-lockdown levels, so people like Meena and Jon could benefit from our round-the-clock support and a safe and comfortable place to stay.

Unseen's approach is two-fold. We provide survivors in the safehouse with practical help, such as negotiating bureaucracy for ID documents and getting to see a GP. Meena's key worker, for example, helped her get on to a computer course and set up a bank account.

At the same time, we also ensure we are meeting survivors' mental and physical health needs – addressing complex trauma while also encouraging wellbeing activities designed to improve mental health and enable people to make social connections.

In February, for example, some residents went on a trip to Glastonbury Tor, while others took part in yoga lessons to help reduce their anxiety and boost their energy. With the onset of the pandemic in March, however, trips were cancelled and external activities halted, so we had to be creative in finding ways to keep up positive mental health and morale while survivors experienced lockdown.

We offered additional emotional support, alternative mental wellbeing sessions and classes such as ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages), alongside more activities than previous years, including photography, sport in the garden, communal meals, and movie and games nights.

With feelings of isolation running high during Covid-19, some survivors benefited from a research project we ran in partnership with BT and Bristol University, to provide them with smartphones and data (see page 20).

“Covid-19 has been so hard for survivors. Many have lost contact with all family and friends through horrific levels of exploitation. During lockdowns, contact from our support workers could be the only connection they had to another person”

Lauren, Head of Survivor Support

# 33

men and women supported in  
**24/7 safehouse accommodation**  
in 2020

*\*Names changed to protect Meena and Jon's Identity*



## SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

# survivors in the community

Unseen's Resettlement, Integration and Outreach (RIO) project provides practical and emotional support to victims of modern slavery and exploitation living in the community. Some have moved on from our safehouses and working with the RIO team is the next stage in their recovery process.

In 2020, as many other support services shut down, RIO staff remained working in a situation that was new to everyone.

Unseen's team had to innovate and do it fast – from organising food deliveries to people who were self-isolating, to hiring a minibus to help a survivor get to an asylum interview while maintaining a social distance.

In one instance, three RIO staff used their own vehicles to help a survivor move home when no removal vans could be found.

In the past year, isolation has been the main challenge for survivors in our Outreach programme, and we have placed particular emphasis on ensuring regular contact. Staff have had video calls with clients wherever possible.

And when restrictions have allowed, staff have been on socially distanced walks with survivors, who appreciated just being outside and having someone to talk to.

# 89

men and women supported towards safe and productive lives in the community in 2020

## CASE STUDY - THE POWER OF NORMAL

In all our support services, Unseen aims to change the lives of our residents for the better and to give them new experiences to help them embark upon their new lives.

One client expressed an interest in learning to sew, for example, and we were able to get a grant to help her on to a course. As a measure of the therapeutic powers of such activities, she told us that sometimes the lessons felt “even more helpful than the counselling sessions, as in counselling all the bad things and bad memories were coming back to me”.

“In the course I could forget about everything, no one to judge, no one talking about things or where are you from, no questions. It was just sewing in a very calm place.”



# beth's story



Beth\* grew up in Nigeria, in an affluent family. She was able to travel to Europe to study and she was doing well until, in 2015, her father died suddenly, and she had to return home.

“Life became very hard for my family without my father,” says Beth, “and after a while, I discovered that my mother had got involved in drug smuggling to try and pay the bills.”

Beth's mother was arrested and then the drug dealers started putting pressure on Beth.

They said her mother owed them money. They tried to force Beth into drug smuggling too. With increasing threats of violence against her, Beth began to fear for her life. So, she fled Nigeria, heading to the UK.

Just after Beth arrived, however, the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, and she got stuck in lockdown. She was trapped, desperately trying to survive until she was trafficked into a criminal network. The criminals threatened physical and sexual violence in order to make her do what she was told.

Fearing for her safety once more, Beth did as she was told. She had become a victim of criminal exploitation (which can include drugs-related activity, forced shoplifting, and forced begging): “I just had to do what I could to survive,” she says.

During an attempted scam, Beth was arrested. The police recognised she was a victim of modern slavery and brought her to Unseen's women's safehouse. With our support, she has been able to get healthcare and at the time of writing was keen to begin some counselling.

As a result of her experiences, Beth struggles to sleep. She is now on a waiting list for therapy to help her to relax, and the safehouse team provide exercise sessions to help relieve her stress.

Beth has big dreams about her future and wants to enter formal education here in the UK. “I am a very ambitious person. I am ready to contribute whatever I have learnt. In five years' time, I hope to be a financial analyst with a job in a big company.”

For now, Beth is waiting for a decision on her claim for asylum. “Every day I wake up with the fear – what if they send me back and I have to start all over again and feel all the pain again?”

But her stay at Unseen's safehouse has given her some stability among all of the uncertainty of her situation and the Covid-19 pandemic.



“There is a little bit of sunshine visible here, being in this house,” **says Beth.**  
“I feel like I have been saved.”





# equipping others

Unseen equips healthcare workers, the police, frontline agencies and businesses with training, advice, and resources, in order to tackle modern slavery and better identify and support its potential victims.



## EQUIPPING OTHERS

# working with business

With around 25 million people\* trapped in forced labour around the world, the chances are that most businesses will have some kind of exploitation in their supply chains. Businesses, therefore, have enormous potential to influence the fight against modern slavery.

Our unique business services are designed to help companies address labour abuse and exploitation in their supply chains and their operations, as well as manage future risks.

In 2020 we stepped up the marketing of our business services – which include consultancy and exclusive modern slavery reports via our Business Portal. Among those who joined the list of organisations we work with were Aldi, PMP Recruitment and the Wellcome Trust.

# modern slavery training

We provide training to businesses and other organisations, such as statutory agencies, working to prevent modern slavery or supporting survivors.

As well as making people more aware of modern slavery and how to spot the signs, our training encourages participants to discuss areas of risk in their business or operations, explore mitigation strategies, and examine ways to improve and strengthen their overall approach.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, much of our scheduled face-to-face training for 2020 was postponed or cancelled. As a result, we expanded our e-learning programmes and Unseen now has e-learning packages ranging from general training, training for First Responders, and training for procurement specialists.

We also have sector-specific e-learning packages aimed at industries such as construction, finance, and food and agriculture.

Our Spotlight programme, which educates young people and those who work with them about child exploitation – in particular, County Lines – was also delivered digitally through a new e-learning package.

To find out more about training for your business or organisation visit [unseenuk.org/modern-slavery-training](https://unseenuk.org/modern-slavery-training) or call 0303 040 2888

# 60

training sessions

# 1,840

people trained

# anti-slavery partnerships (ASPs)

The Anti-Slavery Partnerships' mission is to support and enable the discovery of, and response to, incidents of modern slavery and exploitation. We do this through a victim-centred, multi-agency and collaborative effort at both a local and regional level.

Unseen founded the Bedfordshire, South West Regional and Eastern Region ASPs, and continues to coordinate and chair them.

In 2020 our work with ASPs has helped ensure modern slavery remained a priority for statutory partners during the pandemic.

For example, we coordinated and led the move to online forums in the South West to enable partners to share key information.

The Eastern Region ASP worked with the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit, and Migrant Help, to ensure partners better understood the impact of changes to immigration rules.

And the Bedfordshire partnership supported the development of a new initiative to raise awareness of exploitation in the area.

\* International Labour Organization and Walk Free Foundation



# influencing government and society



Unseen's advocacy work aims to influence legislation, policy and consumer choices – from producing studies on new issues we have identified, to presenting at conferences and seminars; from working behind the scenes with the UK government, to raising modern slavery issues in the media. Here are some highlights from 2020.





## INFLUENCING

# unseen children's house report

In 2020 we published a report on our findings from the Unseen Children's House pilot, following academic assessment and appraisal of the project. The project, which concluded in 2019, was set up to provide care for looked-after children who had experienced trafficking and modern slavery.

Unseen's report, entitled Missing Home, highlighted how systemic failings in the care system, poor training and cost-cutting are contributing to a shocking number of trafficked children disappearing from care.

Unseen's Children's House piloted an alternative "accommodation-plus" support model.

This combined the care and nurture of a family environment with the elevated levels of supervision and risk management of a registered children's home, plus the added security of a safehouse with specially trained staff. Importantly, during the project, no children in the home went missing.

Our findings were shared with the Home Office and the Children's Commissioner's office, who congratulated us on our report, describing it as "excellent".

# addressing digital exclusion among survivors

In 2020 Unseen worked on a project with BT and Bristol University to provide residents with a smartphone and data, to be used in any way they liked. We were keen to find out more about what has become known as "digital exclusion" among vulnerable groups, and how phones might improve the wellbeing of survivors of modern slavery. The findings from the study will be published in 2021.

## INFLUENCING

# advocacy highlights from 2020

- ◇ As a leading authority on modern slavery and human trafficking, Unseen took part in many Westminster and Government briefings and input to a number of policy and legislative reviews.
- ◇ At the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Unseen worked with other charities on a campaign to get more Government support for voluntary sector organisations providing vital frontline services, including supporting the survivors of modern slavery.
- ◇ For Anti-Slavery Day 2020 Unseen launched our #whatareyoudoing campaign, asking businesses what they are doing about forced labour in supply chains. Media coverage of Unseen at the time created more than 1 million opportunities to read about our work, while others, such as MPs, major supermarkets and some Police and Crime Commissioners, shared our campaign on social media.
- ◇ Unseen chairs the Transparency in Supply Chains Modern Slavery Strategy Implementation Group (MSSIG) and is also a member of the Prevent and Protect MSSIGs. These groups are made up of key stakeholders and engage with the Home Office to help them develop policy.
- ◇ Despite Brexit and the UK leaving the EU, Unseen remains a member of, and attends, the EU Civil Society Platform on Trafficking of Human Beings.
- ◇ Unseen had high-level engagement with the devolved governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales to improve the response to modern slavery and human trafficking in those countries.
- ◇ Unseen continues to act as an advisor to Tech Against Trafficking, a coalition of technology companies working together to eradicate human trafficking.
- ◇ Unseen took part in multiple speaking engagements to business and the Third Sector. Covid-19 restrictions meant these took place, for the most part, online.

# modern slavery & exploitation helpline

– 08000 121 700

The UK-wide Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline is a confidential and independent helpline providing information, advice and guidance on any modern slavery issue to potential victims, businesses, statutory agencies and the public. It is an important part of both our support work and our influence work.

Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the Helpline takes calls from across the UK and in some circumstances internationally. It receives no Government funding.

The Helpline can liaise with callers in more than 200 languages. Callers who are potential victims are offered help to connect with law enforcement agencies, to get out of a situation of exploitation and stay safe.

The Helpline offers emotional support to callers, and our close connections with partners mean we can also provide help to access social, legal and housing services.

In 2020, Covid-19 and the subsequent economic downturn affected the visibility of the threat of slavery in such places as car washes and nail bars.

Accordingly, public calls to the Helpline declined with overall contacts down by around 14%. Despite this, the number of modern slavery cases resulting from these contacts remained fairly consistent – at 1,742 compared to 1,812 in 2019.

Being at the forefront of calls and cases related to modern slavery, the Helpline plays a vital role in identifying and reporting emerging trends. This helps our partners understand how exploitation is changing and to enact strategies to combat it.

Dame Sara Thornton, UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, says of our work:

“The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline has provided an important alternative mechanism for those in situations of modern slavery or exploitation to seek help and support.”

“The Helpline was never needed more than it was during Covid times when there have been fewer opportunities for agencies, including law enforcement, to encounter potential victims”

Colin Ward  
Programme Challenger  
Greater Manchester Police

6,052

calls

1,924

contacts through our website and app

20,847

potential victims of modern slavery indicated since the Helpline launched in 2016



## parvan's story

A solicitor contacted the Helpline to explain that his client, Parvan\*, was being held in an immigration removal centre and could be deported in a matter of weeks.

Parvan owed money to loan sharks in another country and had left there, fearing for his life. The lenders had threatened to torture Parvan and sell his body parts. Parvan's friend offered to help him escape, saying he had a contact who could arrange a job for him in mainland Europe. The friend paid for his flight to Europe, saying Parvan could pay him back once he started working.

When Parvan arrived, he was picked up at the airport and driven to a construction site. His passport and papers were confiscated, and he was made to work 11 hours a day at the site without pay and only one meal a day.

Another victim tried to escape from the site and, according to Parvan, had his fingers cut off. Eventually, Parvan managed to escape from the site and made his way to the UK by hitching a ride in a lorry and crossing the Channel by boat.

When he was picked up by Border Force, no mention was made to Parvan about human trafficking or modern slavery. However, once alerted by Parvan's solicitor, we assessed Parvan as a potential victim of human trafficking and labour exploitation and sent a referral to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), advocating on Parvan's behalf.

As a result of our intervention, Parvan was transferred away from the immigration removal centre and entered into the National Referral Mechanism (the Government's system for supporting victims of modern slavery). He is now getting the crucial help and support he is entitled to.

\*Name changed to protect Parvan's identity

# thank you

A huge thanks to the following organisations and individuals for their valuable contribution to Unseen's work in 2020

- ◇ Bristol City Council
- ◇ The Henry Smith Charity
- ◇ Quartet Community Foundation
- ◇ Medlock Charitable Trust
- ◇ The Pilgrim Trust
- ◇ The Peter Stebbings Memorial Charity
- ◇ John James Bristol Foundation
- ◇ The Nisbet Trust
- ◇ The National Lottery Community Fund
- ◇ The Wixamtree Trust
- ◇ Postcode Neighbourhood Trust
- ◇ Batchworth Charitable Trust
- ◇ Garfield Weston Foundation
- ◇ The Swire Charitable Trust
- ◇ The Emmanuel Kaye Foundation
- ◇ The Fairfield Charitable Trust
- ◇ Holbeck Charitable Trust
- ◇ Dandia Charitable Trust
- ◇ Souter Charitable Trust
- ◇ CAF
- ◇ Berkshire Community Foundation
- ◇ Delfont Foundation
- ◇ Aldi
- ◇ Sky
- ◇ JD
- ◇ Nestle
- ◇ Marks & Spencer
- ◇ Legal & General
- ◇ Amazon
- ◇ BT
- ◇ PMP Recruitment
- ◇ Vodafone Foundation
- ◇ Avon & Somerset PCC
- ◇ Essex PCC
- ◇ Bedfordshire PCC
- ◇ Lancashire PCC
- ◇ Leicestershire PCC
- ◇ Metropolitan Police Service
- ◇ Surrey Police
- ◇ Staffordshire Police
- ◇ North Wales Police
- ◇ Mark Garbers

“Throughout Covid-19, unseen never missed a beat. I am proud to be connected to this wonderful organisation which has been a beacon of hope and provided much-needed support for the most vulnerable in our society”



Levison Wood  
Explorer, writer and photographer,  
and Unseen Patron



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

# expenditure

Combined charitable activities:  
£1,748,660

**65%**

1. supporting  
survivors  
(£1,459,822)

**10%**

2. equipping  
stakeholders  
(£220,658)

**3%**

3. influencing  
policy and society  
(£68,180)

Combined support costs:

**11%**

4. support costs  
(£241,452)

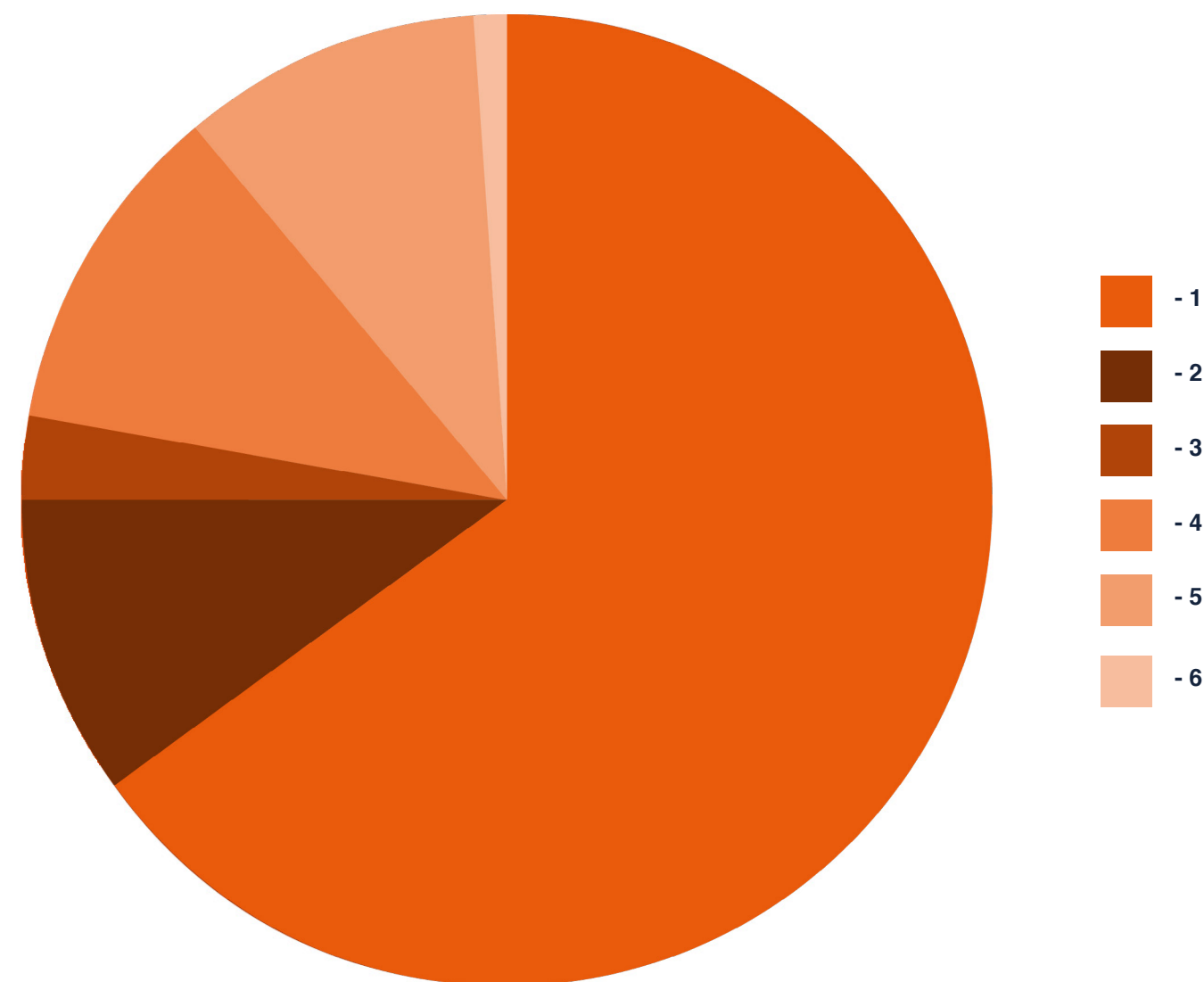
**10%**

5. raising funds  
(£221,978)

**1%**

6. governance  
(£26,198)

Total expended: **£2,238,288**



**75.3%**

of income spent on  
charitable activities

For every £1 spent on fundraising  
in 2020, £4.91 was raised to invest  
in our work

# income

**43%**

1. service income  
(£990,869)

**17%**

2. trusts and grants  
(£405,968)

**14%**

3. corporate income  
(£319,510)

**15%**

4. donations  
and legacies  
(£342,345)

**7%**

5. business services  
(£164,408)

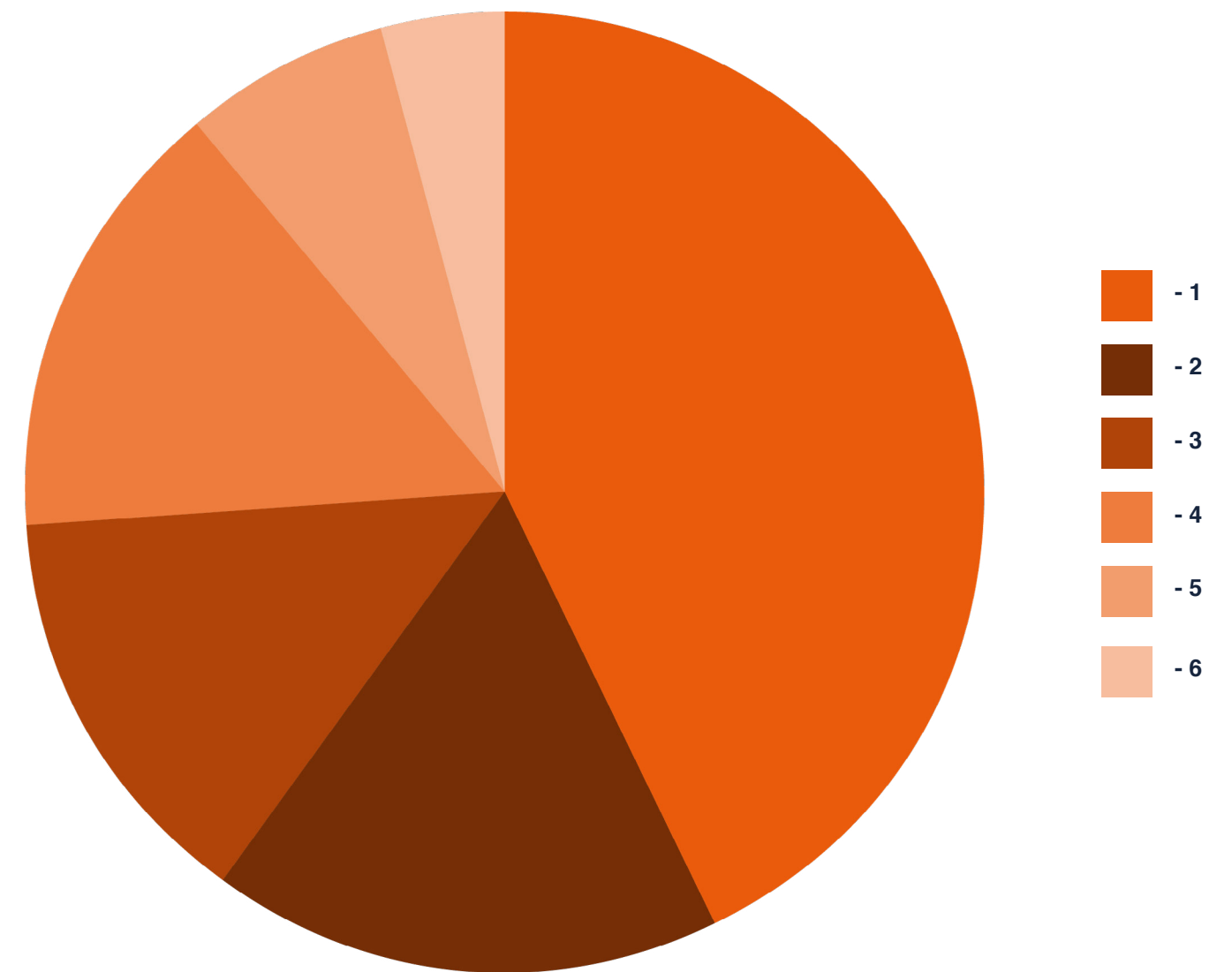
**4%**

6. coronavirus job  
retention scheme  
(£92,327)

**0%**

7. trading and  
other income  
(£6,107)

**Total income: £2,321,534**



A note on this year's financial summary: in 2020, we made a surplus, meaning our expenditure as a percentage of income will be lower than previous years. We are also required in our accounts to class the HMRC rebate for furloughed staff as income, meaning our expenditure is not reduced by the amount we recovered from furlough. Most of the staff we furloughed were in Fundraising or Support Services teams, meaning the percentage of support/fundraising expenditure appears higher than the reality. Finally, donated income was down on 2019, so our return on fundraising income has dropped.

The information provided is extracted from our as yet unaudited accounts and are subject to any amendments required as a result of the audit. Full audited accounts will be available in due course from unseenuk.org and the Charity Commission website



# leave a legacy – and help us end modern slavery

When you leave a legacy to Unseen, you commit to a world without slavery.

Your generosity will enable expert support for survivors, and ensure that each voice can be heard, harnessed and amplified to fuel the fight against modern slavery.

Check out our website for more information, or call us to talk it through:

[www.unseenuk.org/leavealegacy](http://www.unseenuk.org/leavealegacy)

0303 040 2888

*"I want to ensure that Unseen can continue to support women and men who have experienced the very worst of humanity. I have left a gift in my will so that survivors can reclaim their stolen lives, and their voices can be heard"*

Anne, Legacy pledger