TLC The Literary Consultancy

Manifesto of Care

"I have been blown away by the care and concern with which my TLC report has been written. I always got the sense that the Reader was on my side and taking my writing seriously."

– KEITH AJEGBO

Since its inception 30 years ago, The Literary Consultancy has been steadfast in its commitment to offering editing services that consider writers holistically and meeting them where they are. This feels basic and self-evident, but there is valid mounting concern about how well writers are actually looked after within the services industry. You can read our think piece about this, originally published in The Bookseller, here.

At TLC, care is important to us. We recognise that good intentions alone do not provide a sufficiently safe or robust framework, and that accountability around how we care for those we work with and for is vital. To that end, we have developed a Manifesto of Care outlining, in the first instance, three core **Guiding Principles** and five **Commitments**.

This Manifesto has been created to be a living document – it will be reviewed regularly, and we will invite the writers we work with to contribute to its future iterations, embedding the co-creativity we already use to power our programmes. It will also directly inform how we carry out our work.

In its current iteration, the Manifesto has been informed by programmes and partnerships we have been involved in over the last 5 years, including data and transcripts from a series of interactive fora, interviews, webinars and surveys involving over 500 writers who have shared with us their thoughts on wellbeing, reasons for writing, key barriers and aspirations, and general thoughts on literary culture.

The Manifesto will evolve over time, and we may not always get everything right. But it feels more important now than ever to offer clear pathways through to show the efforts we are making, and the behaviours that we commit to, to ensure we care for those we work with.

We welcome your thoughts, and value your continued trust in us.

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Principles

Our Principles use the framework provided by the Society of Authors' Author Care Toolkit. Here is how we articulate each ofthese principles at TLC.

Transparency

We believe in transparency. This means that our clients understand upfront what each service involves, what's included, and what's not. There is no upselling, there are no hidden fees, and access to all of our policies is available as needed. This includes Terms and Conditions, Service Outlines, Fees Payments and Refunds, Complaints, Privacy and Data, Accessibility Notices for TLC Events and Courses, and our AI Policy.

Support and inclusion

We are open to writers' needs and requests for reasonable adjustments whilst respecting the parameters of the services we are able to provide by ensuring these are transparent. Our Community platform Being A Writer is built on the ethos of supporting writers to create happier, healthier habits and we commit to remaining mindful of writers' wellbeing at all stages. We will provide and continue to evaluate resources to support clients before and after services to ensure that wraparound support is included, and will signpost to external support and resources where necessary and appropriate.

Respectful communication

TLC commits to professional and timely communication with client-writers that includes providing updates if there are any changes to service delivery plans and allows space for authors to raise queries or concerns. As a strictly non-AI company we take seriously the responsibility we have to provide warm, human-centred communication that takes into account each author's journey to us and through our services.

We expect these principles to flow both ways and take seriously any disrespectful communication with TLC staff, editors, mentors, and any other freelancers. We also commit to these same principles when working with those staff, editors, mentors and freelancers.

Commitments

These five Commitments represent specific actions we are committed to taking, to demonstrate our care of our clients, partners, staff, freelancers, students, and anyone we work with.

We treat each writer we work with as individuals, with due care and empathy

We will undertake training to ensure our services are trauma-informed and mindful of wellbeing, disability, illness and other systemic barriers.

We respect our impact on the environment and will work to reduce and offset that impact wherever possible

We will review our Environmental Sustainability policy in line with our Climate Action Toolkit, and continue to support the National Forest as a corporate donor.

We respect and prioritise human creativity

We will not use or promote generative AI in any of our processes at TLC and will update our AI policy in line with our learnings.

We believe in fair pay for writers, editors and creative industry workers

We will use industry standards to guide our costings, fees and salaries and champion fair pay for writers at all times.

We believe that professional editing should be available to everyone regardless of circumstance.

We will ensure that 20% of our editorial service provision is free or subsidised, with bursaries in place for lower-income writers.

Resources we have been inspired by

- ‘The Author Care Toolkit’, Society of Authors
  https://societyofauthors.org/resource/author-care/
- ‘A manifesto of radical care, or how to be human in the arts’, Tian Zhang
  https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essays/a-manifesto-for-radical-care-or-how-to-be-a-human-in-the-arts
- ‘Manifesto of Care’, Contact MCR
  https://contactmcr.com/about-us/manifesto-of-care
- ‘The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence’, The Care Collective
  https://www.powerinstitute.org.au/sites/default/files/2024-05/The%20Care%20Collective%20-%20The%20Care%20Manifesto%20%282020%29.pdf

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