



Dear Everyone,

Our mission - we make books for everyone, because a book can change anyone - implies a deep sense of responsibility. We understand the profound role that our authors can play in shaping culture, policy and society, and the impact their books can have.

That purpose invites some tough questions around some of the most fundamental issues of all for any publisher: which books should we make, and how should we make them?

Our starting point is our deep commitment to our authors and their free expression. That freedom is essential but not unlimited: it comes with a shared responsibility to protect readers and others from serious harm. And the flipside of free expression is the expectation that our editorial choices may be contested. We should expect a vigorous debate about who, what and how we publish, and we must be prepared for it.

Making those choices is a privilege and responsibility. We fulfil it by working with the best authors, employing the best people in the business and trusting them to do great work. Now we are going further: through the Publishing Principles attached and a programme of workshops that will follow, we are providing additional support for our people and teams as they exercise that responsibility.

This company has a social purpose at its foundation. It has been expressed in many ways over the years, from Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer's commitment to diversity of publishing to Allen Lane's statement of purpose as both 'missionary and mercenary'. We might put it differently now, but operating both commercially and responsibly remains fundamental to our definition of great publishing. We pursue that goal collectively in a spirit of openness, respect, courage and constant learning. These principles will help us do that; thank you for everything you do to achieve it.

With my best wishes,

Tom

Our publishing principles

These principles set out our general expectations for the quality and sensitivity of our publishing. They support – but are no substitute for – the experience and insight of our teams.

Every new book we sign begins with our judgement about the value of the work and its market opportunity. Alongside, we assess the risks we are taking with our capital, people, time and reputation. Even when the financial risk alone is low, our publishing principles underline that our standards must remain high.

So these principles apply to every book we publish in every medium, and to every aspect of the book (not only its words and ideas but its cover, illustrations, publicity, marketing and so on). They apply to everyone involved in the entire publishing, marketing and distribution process, and our editors play a central role by virtue of their close partnership with authors. We have three publishing

Our publishing principles at-a-glance



1. Explore many viewpoints

As the UK's leading publisher, we don't just sell the most books in this market; we publish a very broad range of voices. We have a longstanding and deeply held belief in the importance and value of free speech, recognising that freedom is subject to legal and ethical limitations. We aim to choose our authors wisely, test their ideas respectfully and support them vigorously.

We will and should publish authors who don't share our own individual views and beliefs. At the same time, we recognise our responsibility to protect readers from content that may cause serious harm to individuals, groups or society more widely.

'Explore many viewpoints' implies a second obligation. That is to seek out and understand diverse opinions throughout the publishing process, to respect the potentially conflicting views of authors, colleagues and audiences, and to use those insights to publish successfully.

This principle is closely related to our commitment as a company to build a more inclusive and representative publishing industry, recognising that book publishing and our wider culture are too often shaped by people who come from a narrow section of society. We have a detailed [inclusion strategy](#) that has a number of targets, including that our new hires and the books we publish will reflect UK society by 2025.

2. Pay attention

Though the details may be different, every one of our divisions has a thorough and well-defined process for selecting and publishing its list.

'Pay attention' highlights the care we take over every aspect of bringing every author's work to an audience, from acquisition through editing to proofreading to design, production, publicity, sales, marketing and distribution. It puts a premium on attention to detail in quality, accuracy and execution. It requires us to consider the impact that a book could have, and to have a clear and robust editorial justification when our authors are tackling sensitive or controversial topics.

'Pay attention' means that we must look outside the organisation, too. We have important legal obligations in the fields of libel, privacy, copyright and contempt of court. Beyond those, the social, political and ethical context for our work shifts by the day; it is our responsibility to understand that external environment and any implications for our publishing and our authors.

3. Speak up

The judgements that we make about sensitive issues can be complex and difficult. Often, there are no easy answers. We want and need anyone to speak up at any stage if they feel that a particular book may risk undermining our mission, values, publishing principles or reputation.

Sensitive content areas

Across the media and entertainment industry, there is some common ground around sensitive and / or controversial content areas that may be harmful and therefore require particular care and attention from authors, publishers and editors. We do not want to avoid such topics: our authors play a vital role in helping our audiences to discuss and understand them. But they do require special care, attention and editorial justification throughout the publishing process.

We identify four sensitive content areas. This list covers all our publishing, and authors and editors will focus on different areas according to the nature of their work (eg fiction or non-fiction, genre and audience).

Legal: authors and editors must take care not to publish material that is libellous, is an infringement of privacy, data protection or intellectual property laws, is in contempt of court or is otherwise unlawful. Potential issues should be identified and flagged with our legal team at the earliest opportunity.

Children: we have a special responsibility for the physical and emotional wellbeing of children (under-16s) who may be readers or subjects of our books. We therefore require strong editorial justification for any content about or for children that covers the following areas:

- sexual behaviour or exploitation;
- the misuse of alcohol, smoking or illegal drugs;
- violence or dangerous behaviour.

When publishing for children we must be particularly aware of the role of books alongside many other influences as childrens' value systems are developing. If we have strong editorial justification in publishing potentially harmful content, we must consider the ability of children, of different ages, to explore these issues, and consider providing guidance to help children navigate the content and develop their own critical thinking.

Harm, crime & discrimination: unless there is a strong editorial justification, we will not publish content that:

- may condone violent or dangerous behaviour;
- includes excessively detailed descriptions of methods of suicide or self-harm;
- is likely to encourage or incite the commission of crime, including terrorism and hate speech;
- contains abusive or discriminatory treatment (including discriminatory stereotypes) of individuals, groups, religions or communities.

Accuracy: authors, editors and their teams must take care not to publish materially inaccurate, misleading or distorted information. Flagging and investigating these possibilities, in partnership with the author, is a vital part of our role through the editing process. Significant errors and mistakes should be acknowledged and corrected promptly via digital channels and in subsequent editions where appropriate.

Our publishing process: tools and checklists

Our publishing divisions and imprints have a range of different ways of choosing which authors and titles to publish, and of helping authors to make the best books they can. Still, there are common elements of the publishing process that are critical to responsible publishing across the company. At the following four key stages our teams will draw on some shared tools, guidelines and processes to ensure all our publishing is consistent and rooted in responsible practices.

1. Author due diligence: Choosing our next generation of authors is among our most exciting and important decision, and acquiring editors will develop a deep understanding of potential new authors before taking their manuscript any further.

2. Acquisition review: All divisions have a regular acquisitions meeting where book proposals and manuscripts are submitted and debated, and key questions answered. This is one of the most important moments in the publication process, where colleagues from across the division engage in an open conversation about the book, and where diverse perspectives are welcomed and considered.

3. Delivery and manuscript review: All our divisions will follow certain key steps in the process from receipt of the author's manuscript through to publication. These depend on the type of book and its content, and may include steps such as commissioning external experts or an in-depth legal read, or closely checking illustrations, maps or other artwork.

4. Publication & beyond: Our Sales, Marketing and Publicity teams play a fundamental role in the publishing process from start to finish: feeding in with their expertise and insights at every stage. Along with our editors, these teams closely support our authors and will develop thoughtful, creative campaigns to support the book at the point of publication and beyond.