Older People and the Theatre: a prelude to safeguarding from the Ages and Stages Company of Elders (New Vic Theatre, North Staffordshire)

The Little Theatre, Rugby (the Little Theatre Guild)

Tuesday 9 September, 2025

From: the Stephen Joseph Theatre’s policy

[safeguarding-policy---2024.pdf](https://sjt.uk.com/assets/safeguarding-policy---2024.pdf)

‘There is no legal definition of ‘adult at risk’. Arts Council England recommends, and the SJT accepts, the following definition: “Adults at risk are people who are or who may be in need of community care services because of a cognitive disability or other disability, age or illness, and who are, or who may be, unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.” For the purpose of this policy ‘participant’ refers to any child or adult at risk who is taking part in an SJT activity.’

*This definition rightly drives best practice when it comes to serving the needs of older theatre goers/participants. At the same time, is it a problem to link ‘age’ to cognitive disability, disability in general, and illness? Is the laudable policy in danger of inscribing age within a deficit model of safeguarding? Are there more positive ways to proceed?*

*What is the role of creative research and practice in identifying these more positive ways of proceeding?*

**Evaluation**

Was our session about right in length; too short; too long?

How accessible was our presentation and discussion?

Did we give you enough time to explore and ask questions?

What did you learn from our session that informed your views about safeguarding for older people in the theatre?

Did our account of our work – including the research and practice base to our work -- change the way you thought about older people and the theatre in any ways?