

Addressing Youth Violence on Social Media: The Case for Digital Sanitation

Humber Violence Reduction Unit Keynote – 18 June 2026

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digital determinants of health hub

wellcome

From causal science to regulatory practice



Research	Policy	Practice
Causal evidence on digital exposure + youth risk	Government, regulation + policing	Youth voice + frontline prevention

The UK operationalised prevention

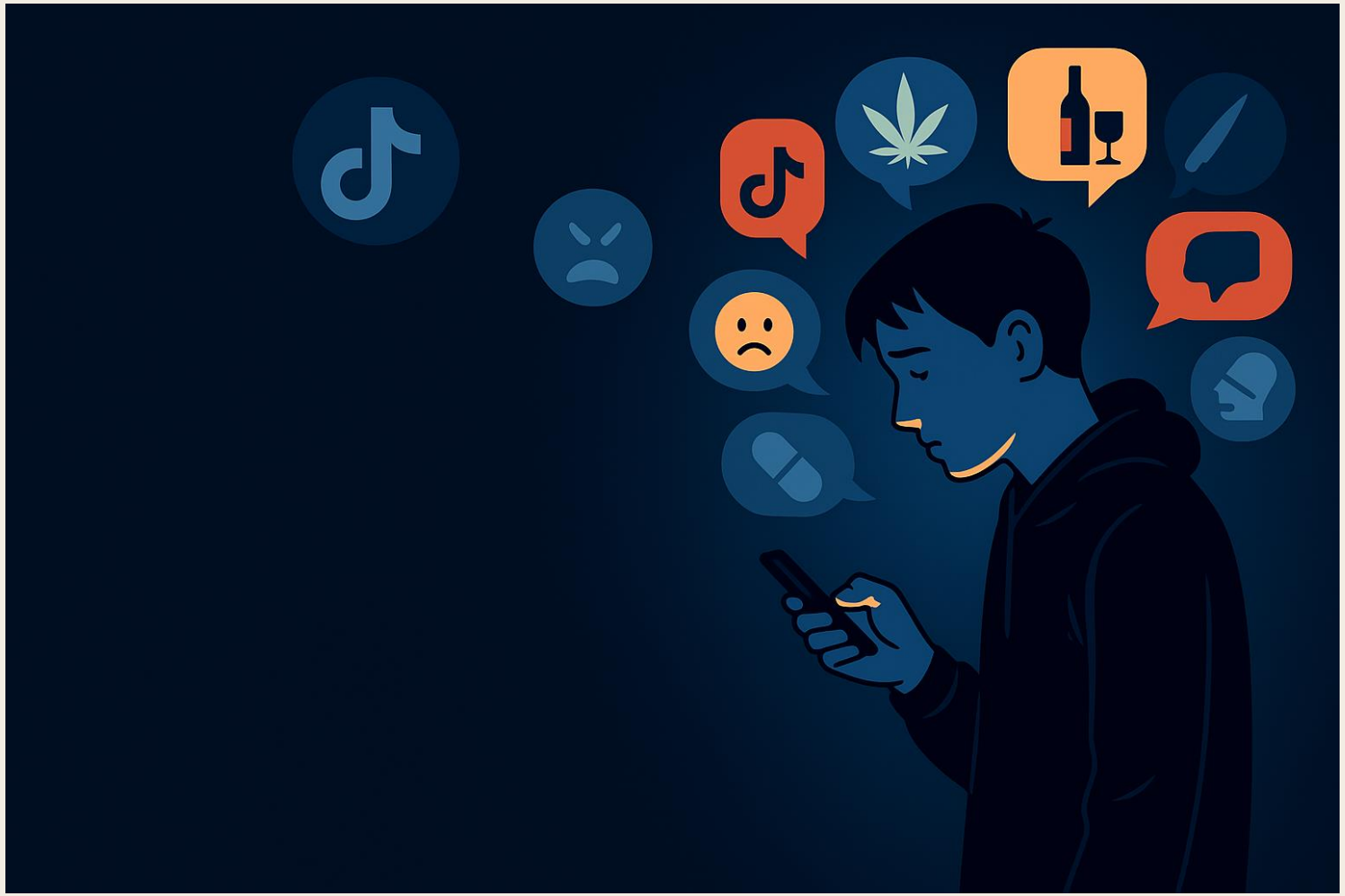
The UK's prevention model

- Reframed violence as preventable
- Coordinated systems
- Addressed concentrated risk

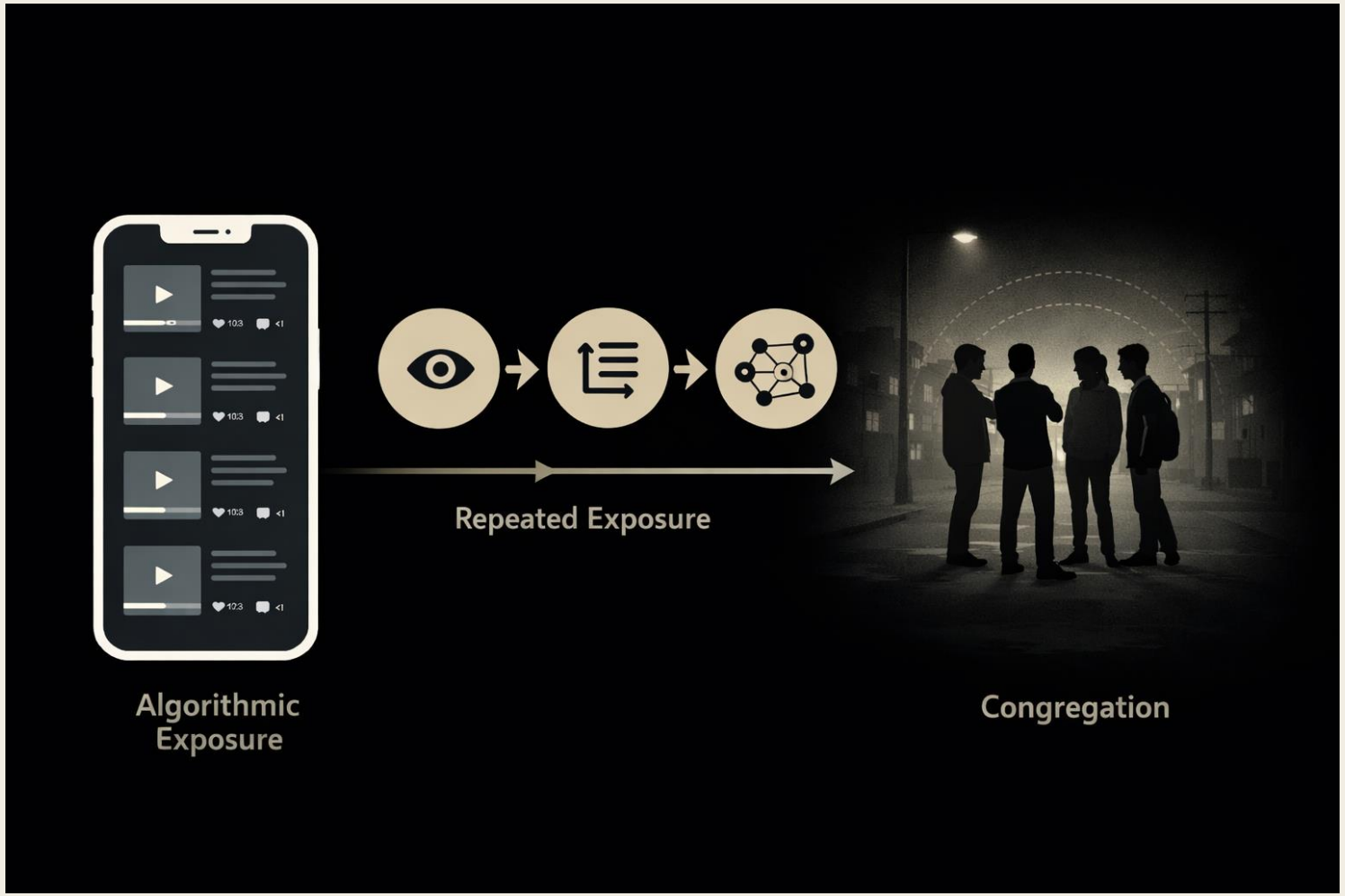
The Changing Environment

- Algorithmically cureated exposure
- Norms shaped in feeds
- Monitoring systems not yet adapted

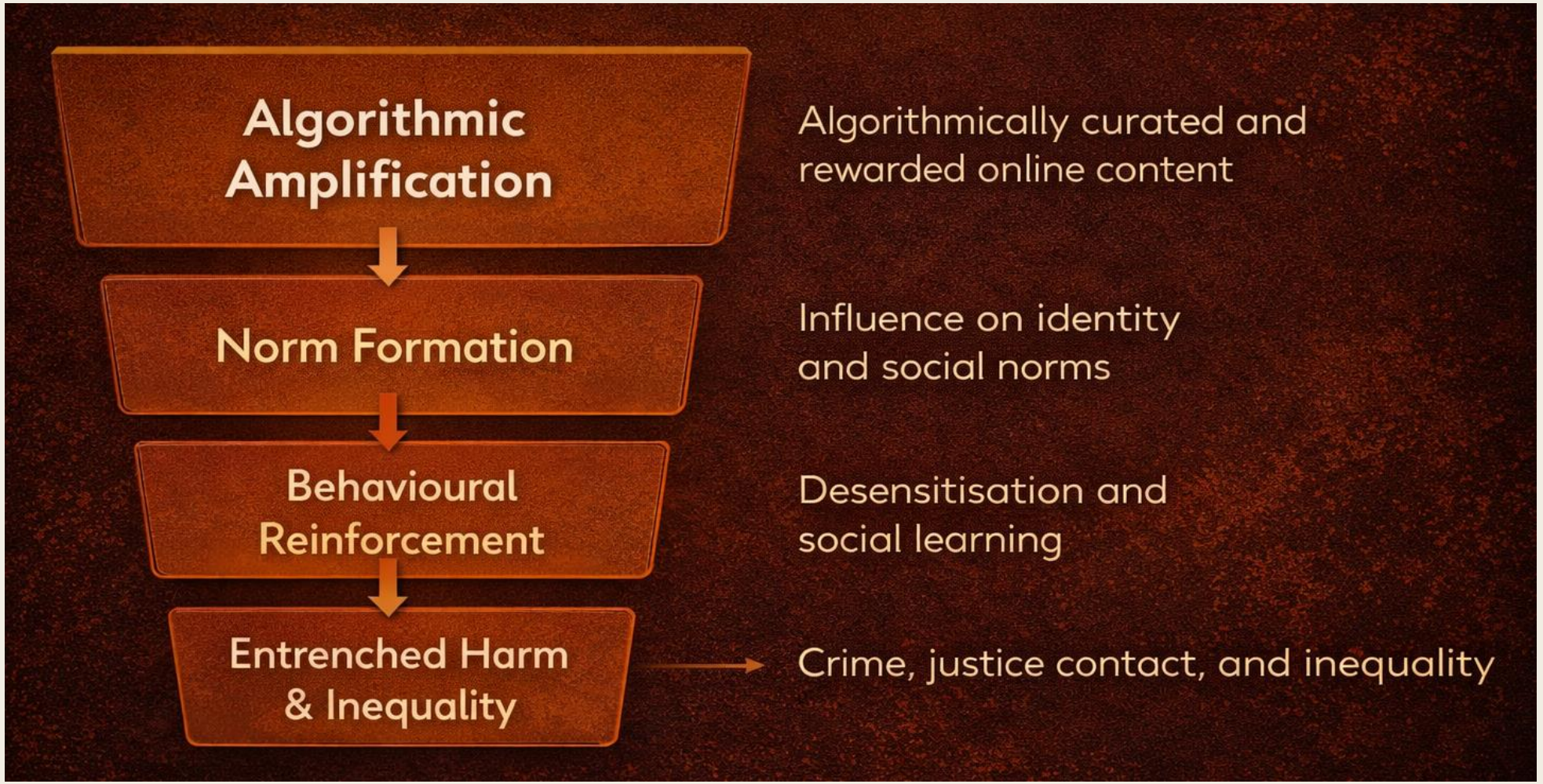
Drawn into risk – through a screen?



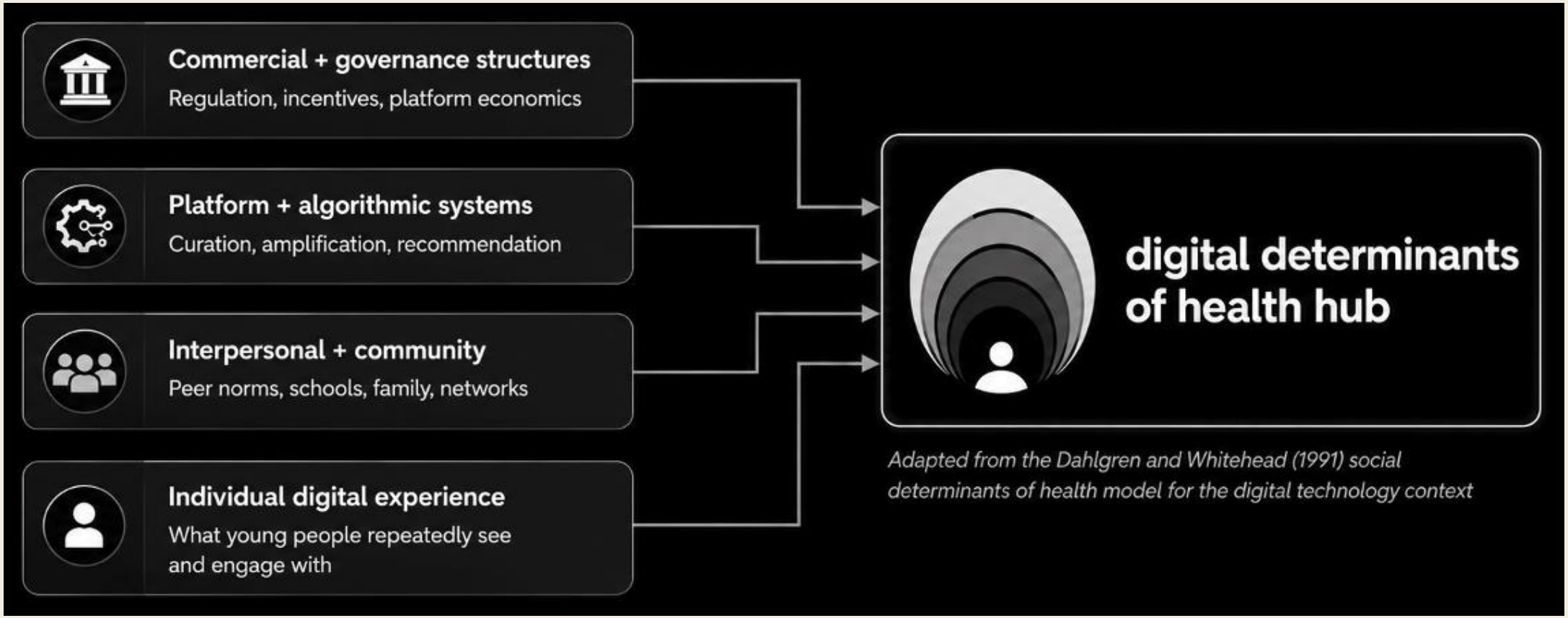
The shift in exposure to risk



What does this shift mean for young people?



Exposure curation: Digital platforms as commercial determinants of health



What the evidence shows

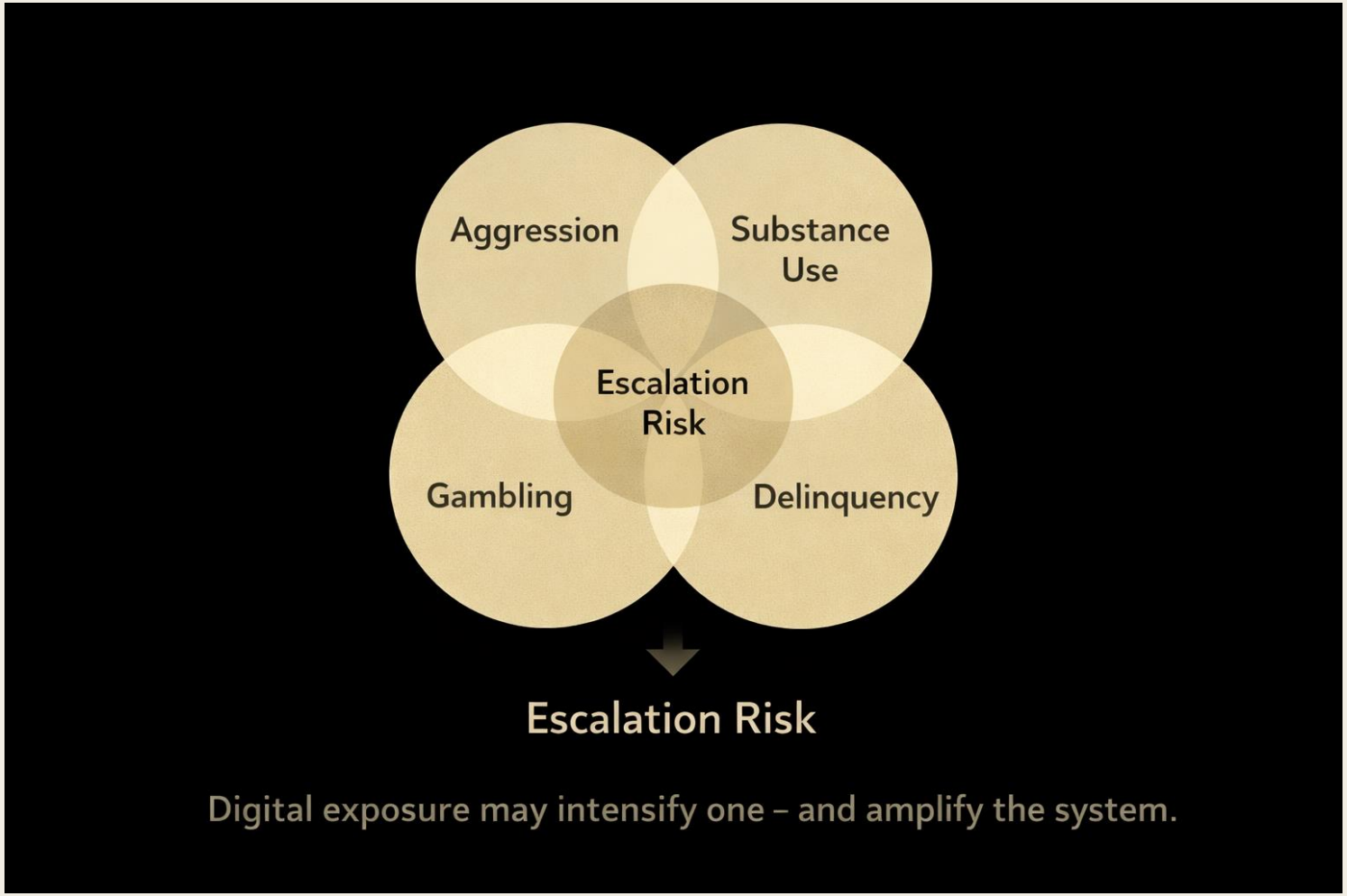


Social media ⇨ **Aggression**

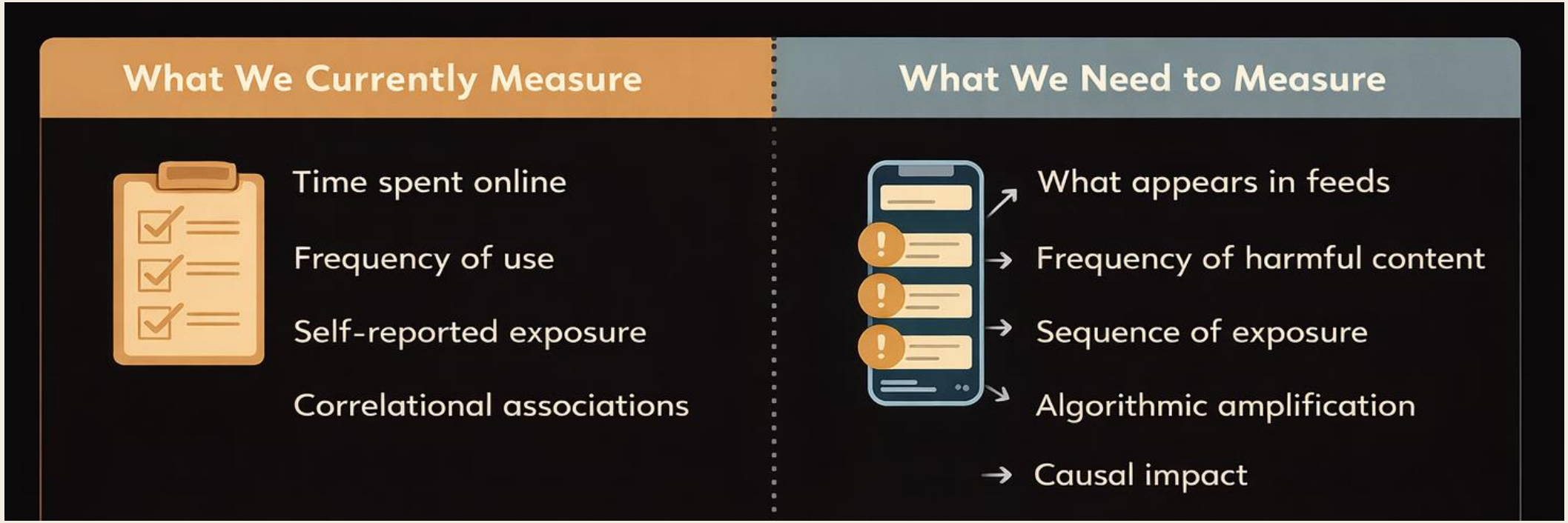
Social media ⇨ **Delinquency**

Social media ⇨ **Fighting and weapon carrying**

Risk behaviours cluster – exposure may amplify them

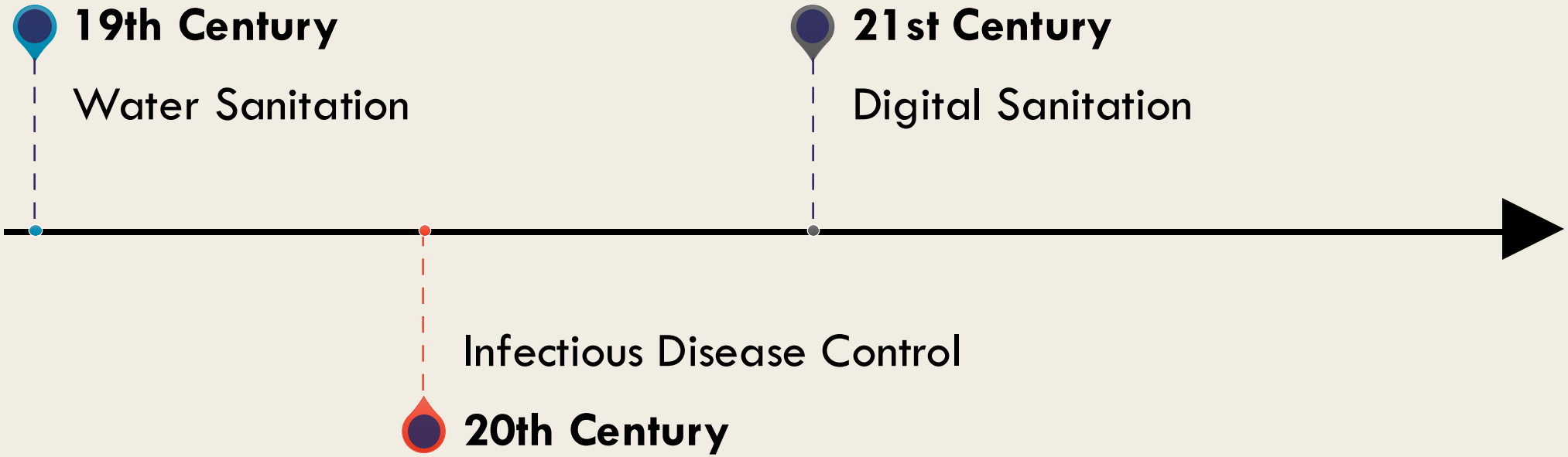


Measuring exposure: Where the evidence falls short

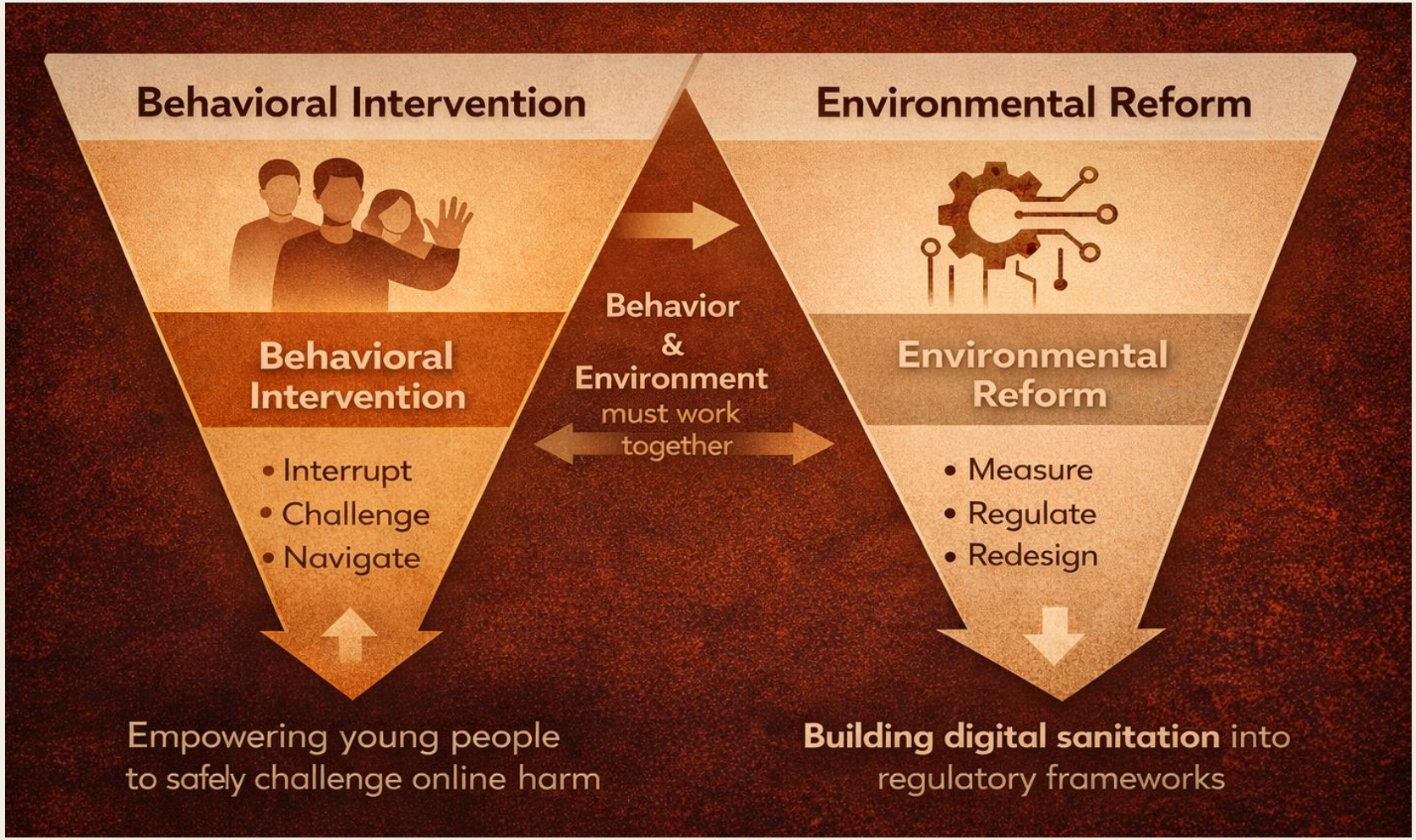


Public health cannot regulate what it cannot measure

Digital sanitation



Prevention works at two levels



Building the infrastructure for digital sanitation

- Independent access to platform data
- Continuous exposure monitoring
- Scalable tools to detect harmful content
- Transparent auditing of amplification systems
- Clear public health standards for digital environments
- Sustained investment to maintain capability over time

Building it in practice



- Independent objective exposure measurement
- Continuous monitoring
- Scalable detection
- Equity
- Causality
- Policy integration

Cross-sector prevention ecosystem

Youth Advisory Groups

GenerationR young people improving Research

Young Dynamos

ALLIANCE 4 CHILDREN

UK + International Expertise

Stanford | Social Media Lab

HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

University of Glasgow

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Policy Advisory Group

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities

Department of Health & Social Care

Department for Education

Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

NHS England

NPCC National Police Chiefs' Council

Centre for Protecting Women Online

ADHD UK

The Ben Kinsella Trust Stop Knife Crime

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

ALLIANCE 4 CHILDREN

University of Bath

Scottish Violence Reduction Unit

Ofcom

Project Collaborators

United Nations

Metropolitan Police

CSaP centre for science and policy

NPCC National Police Chiefs' Council

Coventry City Council

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration Coventry

Faculty of Public Health

Celtic FC Foundation Football for Good

Celebrating 15 years SPFL Trust

nominet

Elba Hope Foundation

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From evidence to action



Policy workshop

School visits +
Youth sessions

Public engagement
campaign



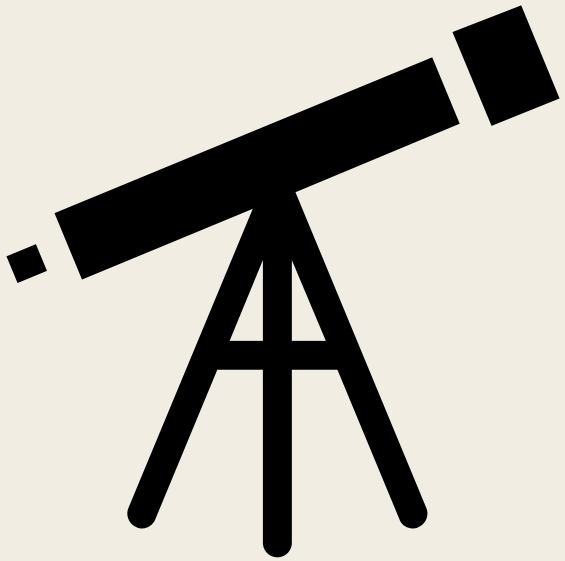
ELBA HOPE FOUNDATION
METROPOLITAN POLICE
NPCC National Police Chiefs' Council
Coventry City Council
HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
CSaP centre for science and policy
GenerationR
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Youth Advisory Group
Policy Advisory Group

Why this matters for Humber



The next frontier

- Infrastructure
- Accountability
- Prevention



Children deserve digital environments that are safe by design — not safe by chance.

That requires **public health infrastructure.**

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