

Paradigm Shift

By Craig Pinkney
www.craigpinkney.com

SOLVE
THE CENTRE FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

The journey...



The Cycle of Deviance

The feeling of isolation and loneliness



Living within disorganised communities



The want/need to join deviant groups





Participation in criminal activity



Secure unit
Prison
Mental health services

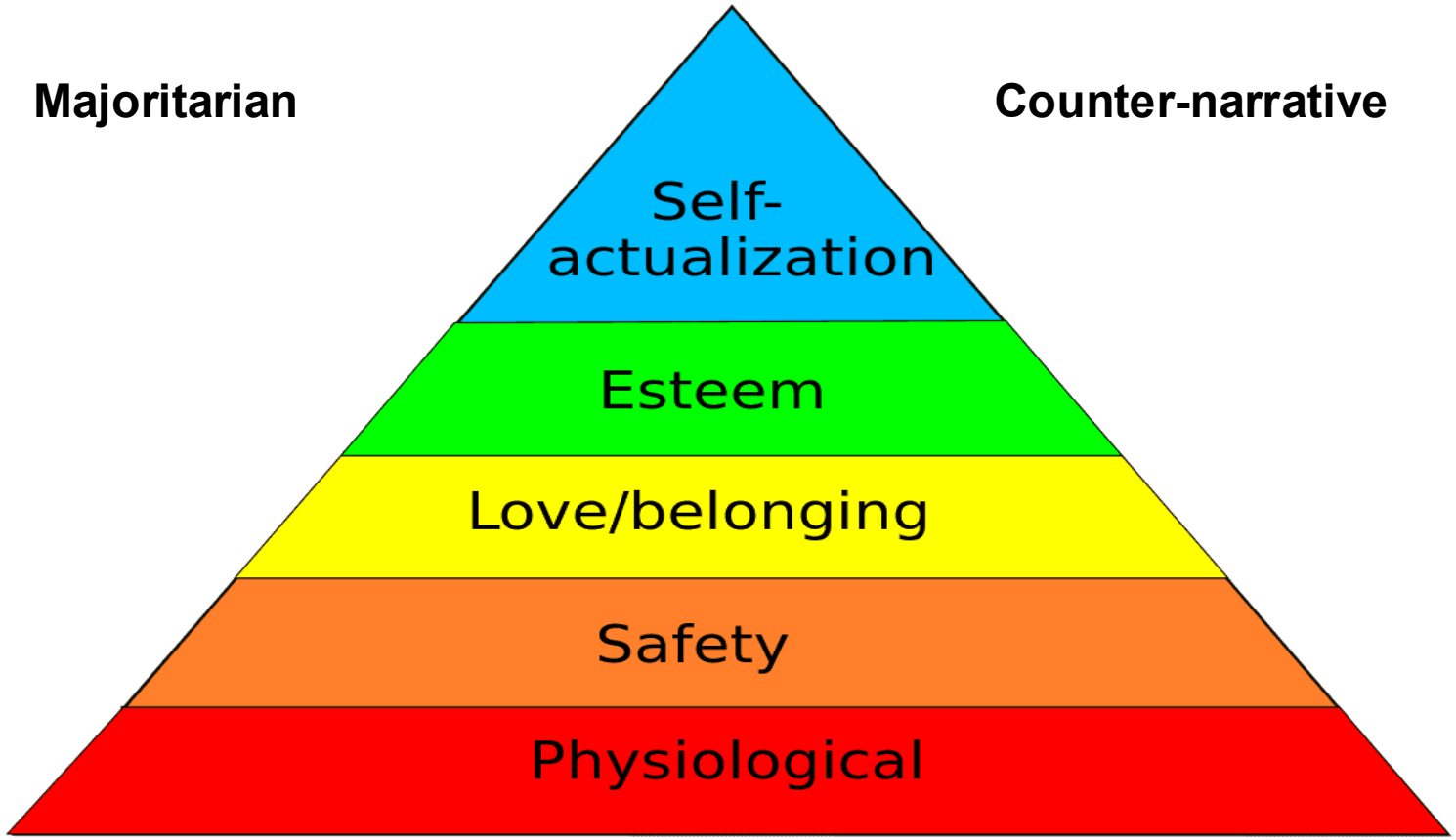
Pinkney (2026)

Street Gangs as Surrogate Families

(Pinkney, 2021)

Understanding Belonging, Identity and Unmet Needs

Majoritarian **Counter-narrative**



WHAT NEED IS BEING MET?

Belonging
Identity
Protection
Recognition
Money
Status
Family
Purpose

“It takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to destroy a child”.











The Landscape of Harm Is Changing

Offline experiences → Online influences → Changing risks

Are We Creating Systems of Harm?

Safeguarding intentions do not always translate into safeguarding outcomes.

EDUCATION Exclusion and disconnection	CRIMINAL JUSTICE Punishment without change
YOUTH & COMMUNITY Short-term intervention	SPORT Protection and performance



What are young people experiencing?

Public Health: What does it actually mean?

We use the language of public health very confidently. My question is: what does public health look like at 11 o’clock at night when a young person you’ve been working with for years calls you?

WHAT MAKES SAFEGUARDING EFFECTIVE?

Evidence matters. So does what the evidence cannot see.



DATA & EVIDENCE



COMMUNITY INTELLIGENCE



LIVED EXPERIENCE

UNDERSTAND TOGETHER → DESIGN TOGETHER → ACT TOGETHER

ARE WE PROFESSIONALLY READY?

(Pinkney, 2019)

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS
Do we understand the realities young people are navigating?	Can we respond to complexity, trauma, exploitation and harm?
RELATIONSHIPS	**ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT**
Can we build trust with those who have lost faith in services?	Are professionals given the time, tools and freedom to make a difference?

Good intentions are not the same as professional competence.

THE HEADLINES:

Gunman jailed after firearm discovery

Burglar jailed following student house raid

Gang violence in Birmingham city centre

Gang member arrested for drug supply

Drill music videos linked to gun crime



DESISTANCE IS NOT AN EVENT

People rarely move away from violence and criminality in a straight line. Change is a process, shaped over time through identity, relationships, opportunity and belonging.

Desistance cannot simply be **done to** a young person. Sustainable change requires **co-production**, where young people have agency in reshaping their identity, relationships and future.

Our role is not to control the journey.

Our role is to create the conditions in which change becomes possible.





Public health has to be...

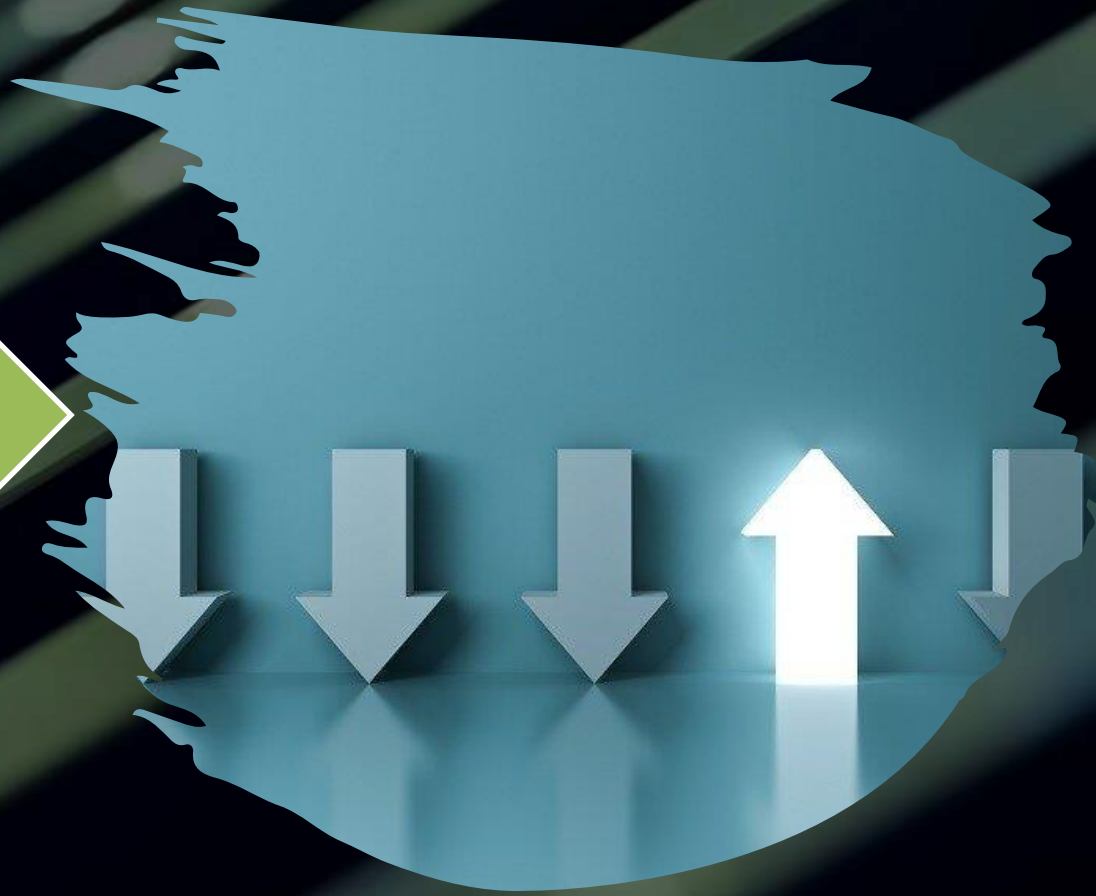
- COMMUNITY LED
- ACADEMICALLY DRIVEN

Institutions do not always need to lead. Sometimes their role is to resource, support and create space for communities to lead their own healing.

The Paradigm Shift

We cannot keep asking young people to change while leaving the systems around them. unchanged

Are we creating the conditions for change, or simply managing the consequences of harm?



Keep planting seeds, even if you see no growth.

