What Research Questions Should the Next Generation of Birth Cohort Studies Address? An International Delphi Study of Experts

For which topic were research priorities identified?
birth cohort studies

In which location was the research priority setting conducted?
international

Why was it conducted at all?
Given the substantial investment involved in establish ing and maintaining a BCS, it is critical that BCS are answering the most pressing research questions in child health and development and as knowledge advances that they continue to be designed to reflect the most current questions. There is also increasing emphasis on docu menting a priori research questions to help guard against flexibility of reporting. Considering this, there have been calls for BCS to be conducted with clearly justifie hypotheses and preset research questions. Further, by adopting a hypothesis-driven approach, future BCS can focus on the most important scientific questions, leading to a more efficient use of the significant resources required for a successful BCS.

What was the objective?
to explore what research questions are currently a priority for the next generation of birth cohort studies

What was the outcome?
a ranking list of 25 research questions

How long did the research prioritization take?
April 2019 - June 2019

Which methods were used to identify research priorities?
Delphi

How were the priorities for research identified exactly?
Step 1: Delphi round 1: participants were asked to provide up to three answers to the question: What are the key scientific questions future birth cohort studies should address?. Step 2: data processing: content analysis and grouping into themes, list of 47 unique statements. Step 3: Delphi round 2: participants were asked to rate each statement. Step 4: Delphi round 3: participants were asked to re-rate

Which stakeholders took part?
Experts in child protection, pregnancy, neonatology and pediatrics, maternal and child health, psychology, and public health. Delphi round 1: 17 participants. Delphi round 2: 21 participants. Delphi round 3: 18 participants.

How were stakeholders recruited?
Purposive sampling was used: Evidence for Better Lives (EBLS) consortium members were consulted and invited to suggest individuals they believed would be suitable for participation. EBLS consortium is a group of 15 academics from the United Kingdom and low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) who form the leadership of on an 8-site BCS with sites in Jamaica, Vietnam, Ghana, Romania, Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Pakistan. Each consortium member was consulted via email and invited to suggest an unlimited number of experts based on their knowledge of key experts in BCS.

Were stakeholders actively involved or did they just participate?
Stakeholders were mere participants of the research prioritization process; they were not actively involved in the process.