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The Scottish Government has finally published its suicide prevention plan, over a month later than originally promised.

While the number of suicides in Scotland has reduced slightly last year, there was still a worrying rise in male casualties, from 517 to 522.

Scottish Conservative Mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells has previously backed calls for a new national body to be created to drive forward change, more suicide prevention training for key staff and for increased support for bereaved families.

The plan, published today, will implement a new National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) by September 2018 and includes mental health and suicide prevention training, developing reviews of all deaths by suicide, use of digital technology and public awareness campaigns.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“Given the importance of this issue it is unacceptable that Scotland has been without a suicide prevention strategy for over a year-and-a-half.

“Suicide remains a main cause of avoidable death in Scotland, so this should be a priority area for any government, but clearly the SNP’s action doesn’t match its words.

“I very much welcome the emphasis on training, review and the public awareness campaign highlighted within the strategy.

“I would also like to welcome the new suicide prevention leadership group but I am sceptical that this group will be implemented by the September 2018, as promised.

“This suicide prevention strategy is already overdue. The SNP must now deliver it quickly and effectively with no further delays.”