

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 11 May 2026

New citizens advice organisation launches to tackle rising hardship across North and East Kent

Citizens Advice North East Kent is open - bringing together the reach, expertise and resources to meet the growing needs of 466,000 people across Canterbury, Swale and Thanet.

A major new Citizens Advice organisation has launched across North and East Kent, bringing together services across Canterbury, Swale and Thanet to better respond to rising demand and increasing pressure on local communities and public services.

Across the region, the need for advice and support continues to grow. In Thanet, more neighbourhoods fall within the 10% most deprived in England than in any other district in Kent. In Swale, socio-economic pressures on the Isle of Sheppey and surrounding areas are deepening. In Canterbury, increasing numbers of residents are seeking help with debt, housing insecurity and benefit issues. These challenges are not only affecting individuals and families, but are placing sustained pressure on local authorities, health services and elected representatives supporting constituents.

Citizens Advice North East Kent (CANEK) has been established to meet this challenge at scale. From 1 April 2026, local Citizens Advice services across the three districts have come together to create more coordinated, resilient and impactful services for the 466,000 people who live in the area.

A stronger team for a complex challenge

CANEK represents a significant new capability for the region. The combined organisation brings together:

- Annual revenues of £1.4 million
- 42 dedicated staff
- 92 trained volunteers
- A combined population of over 466,000 people served, spanning urban, coastal and rural communities across three local authority districts

This is not simply an administrative change. It is a strategic investment in building the capacity, resilience and influence needed to respond to rising demand - now and into the future.

What this means in practice

CANEK is now positioned to:

- Expand frontline support for people facing problems with benefits, debt, housing and employment
- Reach people who struggle to access services, including those who are digitally excluded, under 25, or in isolated communities

- Generate and amplify local evidence to inform decision-making by funders, local authorities and national government
- Work closely with elected representatives and partners to improve the systems that affect people's lives
- Pursue funding and partnerships at a scale that smaller, standalone services could not achieve

Free, confidential advice will continue to be available from multiple local access points across the three districts. CANEK's first integrated annual impact report will be published in 2026.

Voices from CANEK

Pam Kenworthy, Chair of Trustees, CANEK, said:

"This new organisation reflects both the scale of need in our communities and our responsibility to respond effectively. By bringing services together, we are better equipped to support residents, work alongside local partners, and provide the insight needed to shape better outcomes across North and East Kent."

Jude Lee, Chief Executive, CANEK, said:

"We are seeing increasing complexity in the problems people face - from debt and housing to benefits and employment. By working at scale, we can not only help more people, but also support councillors and MPs in resolving constituent issues and identifying the wider changes needed to improve people's lives."

Working in partnership

CANEK is committed to working closely with councillors, MPs and partner organisations across the region. The organisation is available to provide briefings, share local insight, and support with constituent issues.

Further information about CANEK, including how to access services and how to support our work, is available at www.canek.org.uk.

Notes to Editors

- Citizens Advice is a leading independent advice organisation, providing free and confidential help with benefits, debt, housing, employment rights and discrimination.
- CANEK operates across Swale, and Canterbury, in partnership with Thanet, with services accessible from multiple local points of contact.
- Canterbury District population: approximately 162,000. Swale: approximately 158,000 and growing. Thanet: approximately 146,000 and expanding.
- Thanet has the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in Kent within the 10% most deprived in England. Swale, including the Isle of Sheppey, also has a significant proportion of communities in the most deprived national deciles.
- Further information: www.canek.org.uk
- Contact details for spokespeople and interview requests are available on request.