



## Castlemilk must be allowed the human right of fresh food

**Anna Stuart**

**T**he 14,000 strong community of Castlemilk on the far southside of Glasgow celebrates its 70th birthday this year but its residents still don't have access to affordable, fresh fruit and vegetables. It is a state of affairs we, the local community, feel so strongly about that we took our fight to secure a supermarket to the United Nations in Geneva. We now hope the supportive recommendations from its committee on economic, social and cultural rights help to progress our campaign for the right to good quality, affordable food as set out in article 11 of the UN convention on economic, social and cultural rights.

It is a right the people of Castlemilk are currently denied. Three years ago Glasgow city council told us to expect an imminent announcement of a "household name" supermarket here after they allocated £3.3 million to prepare the ground. So far, there has been little sign of progress. As things stand residents have to trudge three miles to the nearest large outlet, a £5.60 return bus journey or £12 in a taxi. Fewer than half of Castlemilk households have access to a car.

According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 35 per cent of Castlemilk residents live in income deprivation. More than 40 per cent of the residents who are of working age are on some sort of benefit. People have multiple jobs to provide for their families, so adding travel costs makes some of the city's poorest even poorer. People still need to eat, to buy nappies and

household essentials. They would be loyal customers along with those from the 23 per cent of privately owned homes locally and the 65 per cent who are not income deprived.

Our other concern is the right to good health. Getting highly processed food is so easy locally, our children are growing up in households with daily barriers to accessing food for healthy lives. Cooking and eating habits are ingrained at a young age. The average life expectancy for a man in Castlemilk is 71 while the UK average is 82. A lack of access to nutrition isn't going to improve this. Neither will the fact there are ten alcohol outlets locally but we need to jump on a bus to buy an orange.

The people here deserve better than living in a food desert. New owner-occupier housing under construction will add households with money to spend, boosting the demand any supermarket can expect. We hope the UN's recommendations are the catalyst for elected officials to comply with what they are being told and deliver our basic human right — the right to fresh, affordable food.

**Anna Stuart MBE is chairwoman of the Castlemilk Housing and Human Rights Lived Experience Board**

