

## The story behind the Regional Activity Center (REGA)

The Emma Hjorth facilities served as an institution to help people with intellectual disabilities for 90 years. This was their realm for work, activity, training and housing.

The Emma Hjorths Hjem (EHH) was gradually discontinued from 1991 to June 1996 as part of the Deinstitutionalization Reform (ansvarsreformen) when the Municipality of Bærum took over the facilities in 1994 from the Akershus County Municipality. Many of the residents moved back to their home municipalities, but many also remained in Bærum after applying for municipal residence. The process was difficult for both residents and staff. People who had known each other for decades were moved to separate towns without any possibility of keeping in touch. An ethics project was initiated to make this job easier. The municipality assigned a project group to scale down operations at the institution.

About 200 new private housing units and various buildings were being built as the institution was being dismantled. The area was earmarked for reverse integration, i.e. that able-bodied people were to be integrated into the area once occupied by people with intellectual disabilities. The municipality wanted to change the area's name back to its original name, Tokerud, but many of the older residents had sad memories of the Tokerud era, so they took the initiative to protest the change. They sent letters to the mayor, and for once a group of developmentally disabled people won their battle. The new name of this residential neighbourhood in Bærum would be Emma Hjorth.

One of the conditions set by Ms Emma Hjorth when transferring EHH to the State in 1915 was, among other things, that the site or funds that arose from the sale would benefit people with intellectual disabilities, now and in the future. This condition was legally approved and has had significance right up to the present day. As large plots of land around the facilities were sold, a lot of money came in that would be used to develop new measures to help the residents. This is how Emma played a role in politics 100 years after she founded her institution.

**In connection with the takeover of the properties in 1994, the municipality attempted to establish and operate a Regional Activity Center (REGA) in the neighbourhood. This resulted in the founding of various sites; Emma Sansehus, Emma Gjestehus, Emma Hjorth Museum, Emma Friskhus and Emma Kafé. The houses together make up the REGA operational enterprise, which receives many visitors throughout the year.**

REGA is a working, leisure and activity center for people with intellectual disabilities in the region while being a space for integration where all citizens are invited to visit and explore. Everyone can meet, greet and socialise on equal terms here, regardless of functional ability.

## The five houses

**Emma Sansehus** is an adventure center for young and old, also for people with complex learning difficulties. Everyone is welcome to a sensory and stimulating environment that combines music, light, vibration and palpable impressions in comfortable surroundings. All the rooms are built according to Universal Design and can be adapted to individuals by altering the lights, sounds and other effects. You can explore your curiosity here and try out different sensory spaces and activities that challenge motor skills, interaction and communication.

**Emma Gjestehus** is a cosy guesthouse with 16 rooms spread over two floors. There are single and double rooms, as well as rooms suited for wheelchair users. Emma Guesthouse offers a pleasant and warm atmosphere with a common lounge and kitchen, as well as a garden with lush nature, green lawns and large birch trees. There are also nice meeting rooms and rooms for groups with capacity for 30 people, and it is possible to rent the entire guesthouse for groups.

**Emma Hjorth Museum** has a permanent exhibition that displays this exciting part of Norway's social policy history, especially leading up to the world war. The museum also has various newspaper clippings and a small library for studying and other investigative activities. The house was restored in the mid-1990s, and the museum was opened in 1998 on the 100th anniversary of the founding of Emma Hjorths Hjem as an institution. The building is the only one left standing from the original farm that Emma Hjorth bought in 1903.

**Emma Friskhus** was completed in 1984 as a wellness center, with a swimming pool and gymnasium for the patients at Emma Hjorths Hjem. The building was a gift from the Friends of Emma Hjorth Foundation. There were also the offices of the institution's leisuretime leaders and the Culture Office which arranged various leisuretime initiatives and cultural events for the institution's residents. Emma Friskhus currently consists of a hot water pool and gymnasium that can be rented.

**Emma Kafé** was completed in 1979 and was the main kitchen and canteen for Emma Hjorths Hjem. Parties and anniversaries were held here for people associated with the institution. Today, REGA runs a café on the premises and offers great food and a cosy meeting place for everyone.

