**Name of Project: Ascent Advice & Counselling**

**Lead partner: Solace Women’s Aid**

**Delivery partner: Latin American Women’s Rights Service**

*I came to LAWRS after I was signposted by another Latin American community organisation. I had been enduring domestic abuse from my husband for many years, but in total silence, as I didn’t really know where to turn and what to do until I became desperate and anguished by the abuse. I was arguing a lot with my husband and dealing with a fair amount of threats, as well as financial, emotional and psychological abuse. The abuse had somehow paralyzed me into acting. Then one day, I decided, I couldn’t continue being subjected to so much despair and I needed to start protecting myself as well as my 9-year-old son. He is autistic and the abuse, if anything, was having a terrible effect on him. First of all, I was convinced that as my husband was the EU citizen and I the EU family member, I would lose my visa if I separated from him. He had also threatened to take my son from me and fight for his custody. I was terrified and I believed all his threats, to me they were real and he had the advantage that he was an EU citizen, and I was completely dependent on him and with no option. I also found out that he was having an affair and was blaming me for all his failures, he had huge debts after his business went bust. Life with him had become unbearable and unsustainable, he was drinking heavily, threatening me and abusing me financially and emotionally. LAWRS intervention helped me to learn about my rights and my options. My husband has finally left the family home and is gone to Spain where he is filing for divorce. With the support of the VAWG team I was helped to identify what my other needs were, such as family and immigration rights, safety issues, welfare rights, etc. I had an interview with an immigration solicitor who explained to me that I could separate from my husband and still remain in the UK in my own right. I was also referred to the EU Settlement Scheme service at LAWRS and have already completed and submitted my application. I am waiting for an appointment to see the family solicitor to discuss about a Prohibited Steps Order and perhaps a Non Molestation Order. I have also been referred for counselling in Spanish. Furthermore, I have been invited to attend the drop-in to receive specialist welfare advice on my welfare entitlement now that I am a single mum. I have also started working part-time, which has been a hugely positive step, to regain control of my life.*