

## Police find gun after bugging woman's phone

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By Peter O'Keeffe

A mother-of-two who admitted possession of a loaded pistol and ammunition was arrested after the police bugged her phone Conversations.

Michelle Collins, 29, was today starting a 15-month jail term after being caught in a large-scale police investigation by the Serious Organised Crime Unit, working alongside Preston police.

The Russian-made Baikal 9mm handgun and silencer was Discovered in a car driven by a 22-year-old women which was Stopped by armed police in Watling Road, Preston, in August last year.

Mark Ainsworth, prosecuting, said tests established the gun had been discharged about a week earlier.

The 22-year-old driver, who will be dealt with later, was a courier for the gun.

Police – who had heard covert tapes taken from Collins home on Acre gate Lane – arrested her in November.

Mr Ainsworth told the court there was a "flurry of panicking telephone calls" between Collins and others after police stopped the car.

In some calls, Collins was heard to speak about the 22-year-old being found with the gun after police swooped on the car.

"She was caught bang to rights with the gun in her handbag. It was loaded with five bullets in it," she was heard to say.

Collins, 29, of Acre gate Lane, Ribbleton, pleaded guilty to possession of a prohibited firearm, possession of ammunition And being concerned in the supply of cannabis.

The tapes also showed she had been packaging the cannabis, the court heard.

Beverley Hackett, defending, said Collins had been "manipulated and bullied" by others into looking after the gun.

Judge Robert Brown accepted she had been unwilling to look after the weapon and told her: "She was acting under the

Influence of a man who was a hardened criminal with a violent nature."

The court was told others will be sentenced in relation to the matter next week.

Judge Brown jailed her for a year on the gun charges with an added three months for the drugs matter.