

## BigLaw Up (Almost) All Night For Brexit

By **Melissa Lipman**

*Law360, London (June 22, 2016, 5:03 PM ET)* -- Major law firms have spent months, if not years, gearing up for the possibility of the U.K. exiting the European Union. But as Britons line up to cast their votes Thursday, the BigLaw SWAT teams are in place — in some cases, literally.

Though the results likely won't be official until Friday morning, firms like Clifford Chance LLP plan to have staff on hand through the night to handle client questions as results begin to come in. The Magic Circle firm has set up a 24-hour rapid response "SWAT team" operations desk with attorneys from offices in major financial centers in Europe, Asia and the Americas to advise clients over the coming days.

"The facility will be staffed from the opening of the polls for as long as necessary to ensure we can quickly and effectively respond to the needs of our clients, wherever they are based," Clifford Chance senior partner Malcolm Sweeting said.

Many of the initiatives have been years in the making, like Hogan Lovells' constitutional change task force that dates back to 2014 and has looked at the implications of the recent Scottish independence referendum and issues involving the European Court of Human Rights, as well as Brexit.

"We've been advising our clients over the last weeks and months ... about what the legal issues might be in either scenario," said Hogan Lovells U.K. regional managing partner Susan Bright, who will be on call with the rest of the task force to handle client questions. "This isn't going to be a 24-hour wonder."

While the Hogan team isn't hunkering down in its London offices as the results trickle in, the team would likely be up into the wee hours of the morning watching, albeit from the comfort of home, Bright said.

"It's a pretty monumental decision really, so I think many people will be staying up late to see what happens," Bright said.

Dechert LLP, meanwhile, has set up a hotline with a single telephone number that will get clients to a team of four attorneys on hand to answer queries, with a task force of 15 other lawyers on standby, according to Miriam Gonzalez, the partner in charge of the operation.

"The team is mostly from my practice, where we focus on international trade and EU relations, and therefore we have a good, broad understanding of where the issues could be," Gonzalez said. "We haven't put together this team the day before yesterday. We have been working for many months on

this."

Other firms have focused on answering as many client questions as possible in the days and weeks leading up to the referendum. For one, Allen & Overy LLP has literally taken its show on the road to clients in Amsterdam, Madrid, Brussels and New York, according to a firm spokeswoman.

And Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft LLP held a marathon series of webinars on Tuesday timed for Asia, Europe and North America that had clients from around the globe tuning in for each session, according to competition partner Alec Burnside.

"We're beyond being on call as we always are in any event, that's the modern way, but we're not planning to see the immediate need for an overnight service," Burnside said between sessions Tuesday. "The intent of the webinars is to assist clients with not the immediate short-term but with medium and longer-term planning."

"The question for clients is how to plan, what their strategy should be through that period of uncertainty [as the U.K. negotiates an exit]," Burnside added.

As for Bright, she will be watching referendum coverage along with her three very interested teenagers, one of whom just turned 18 in time to vote.

"I'll probably try to get some sleep, though, because I want to be on my toes Friday when people are going to want to hear things," Bright said.

--Additional reporting by Alex Davis and Mark Taylor. Editing by Christine Chun and Kelly Duncan.