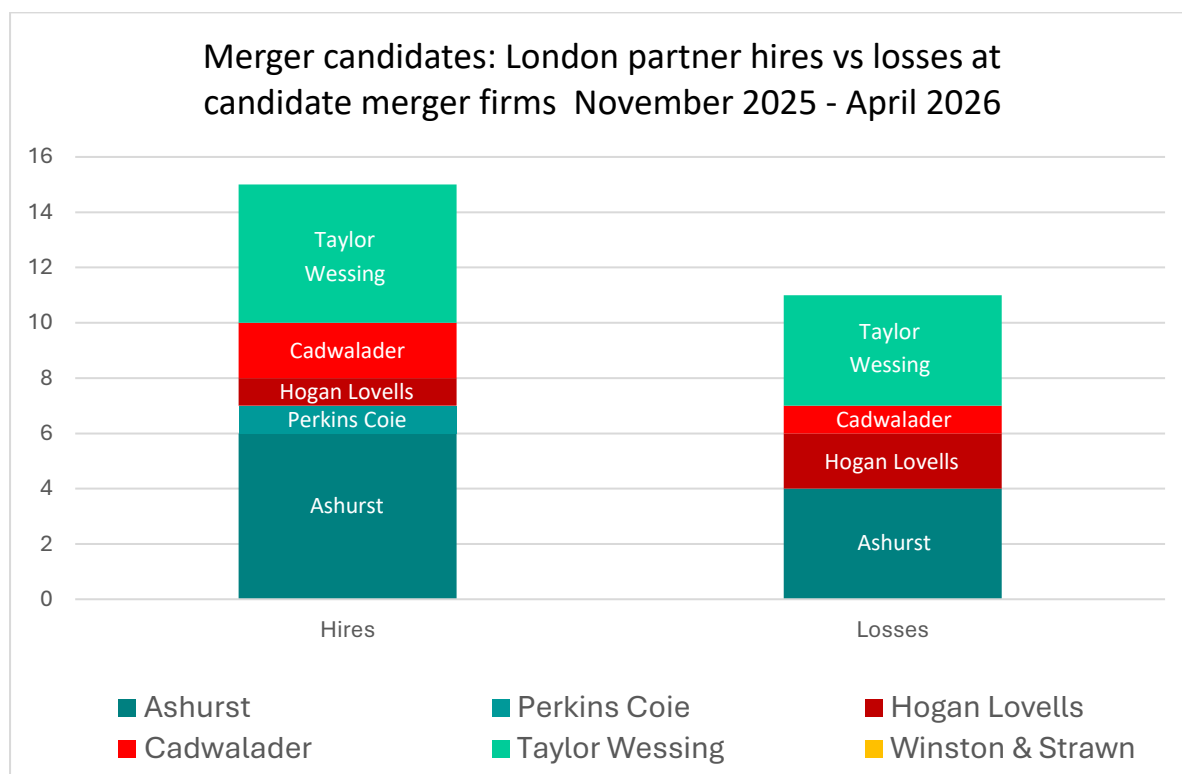


## Pre-merger paradox – some atypical hiring

05 May 2026

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The dying days of 2025 saw [an unprecedented slew of law firm tie-ups](#): between 17 November and 18 December, no fewer than three transatlantic mergers were announced: Ashurst with Perkins Coie to form **Ashurst Perkins Coie**; Taylor Wessing with Winston & Strawn to form **Taylor Winston**; and Hogan Lovells with Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft to create **Hogan Lovells Cadwalader**.

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When law firms merge, elevated partner attrition is common - both immediately before and after the coupling - as practice overlaps, client conflicts, partner egos, and questions of relative contribution almost inevitably come into play. Far less common is for partner hires at the pre-merged legacy firms to outstrip departures. Indeed, in the period immediately following the announcement of a tie-up, legacy firms typically seek to minimise, or even freeze, lateral hiring. The rationale is straightforward: in an already delicate integration - often balanced on a knife edge - where low-level turf wars and internal power plays are distraction enough, introducing further cost, complexity, and potential conflicts via third-party arrivals risks unsettling an already fragile equilibrium.

So, it is somewhat surprising that, according to Edwards Gibson's *Law Firm Partner Moves in London*, since the merger announcements began in November 2025 to the end of April 2026, the merger candidates have collectively hired **15** partners against just **11** lateral defections to rivals. This breaks down as: **Ashurst** (6 hires vs 4 departures); **Taylor Wessing** (5 hires vs 4 defections); **Cadwalader** (2 hires vs 1 defection); and **Perkins Coie** (1 hire vs 0 defections). Whilst **Winston & Strawn** has neither lost nor gained any laterals, **Hogan Lovells** stands out as the only firm in net decline, with 1 hire offset by 2 exits.

Against that wider backdrop, as Edwards Gibson's forthcoming (92<sup>nd</sup>) edition flags, the last two months are notable for their tempo: Ashurst and Taylor Wessing alone contribute nine arrivals (a quintet and a quartet respectively), and even Cadwalader and Perkins Coie's solitary hires are proportionately meaningful for their bonsai London partnerships – in Perkins Coie's case lifting partner headcount by close to 15%.

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