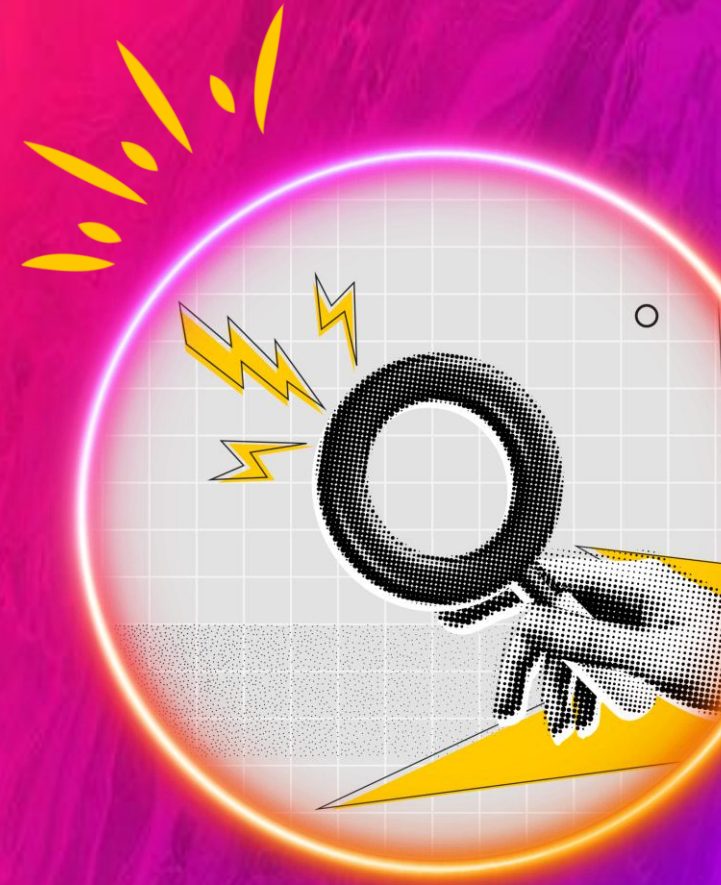


LEGAL SECTOR • 2026 MARKET REVIEW

M&A ACTIVITY IN THE LEGAL SECTOR

M&A Insights Drawn from Our Market Expertise and
Deal Experience.



COOPER PARRY
DEALS

MARKET DYNAMICS

THE UK LEGAL SECTOR CONTINUES TO CONSOLIDATE AT PACE

£60bn

Total legal services revenue in 2025

£534m

Record annual private equity investment into UK law firms, set in 2024

+100%

Increase in share of SRA-regulated firms operating as Alternative Business Structures over the past 9 years

75%

Law firms now favour private equity over mergers/partnerships

70%

Of medium sized law firms have reported direct approaches from private equity investors

1 in 5

Large law firms consider some form of acquisition in the year ahead

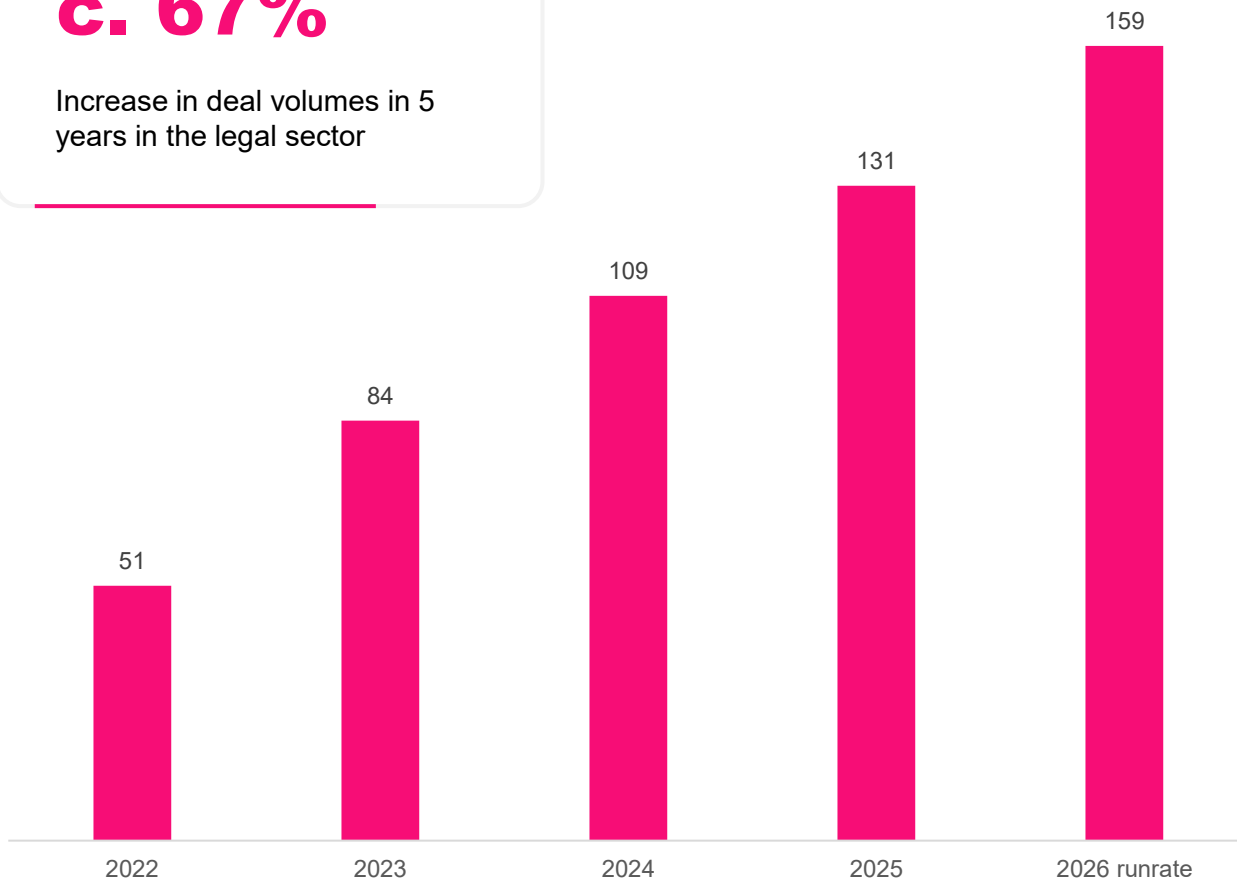
Sources: Law Society, Acquia, Dye & Durham, Citi Hildebrandt

DEAL VOLUME

THE LEGAL SECTOR DEAL VOLUME IS ON A SUSTAINED UPTICK

c. 67%

Increase in deal volumes in 5 years in the legal sector



Source: MergerMarket

Year on year, deal volumes have been rising 20%

Lower-to-mid-market firms dominate volume, with PE and PE-backed trade driving the deal count

Monthly completions peak around the Autumn budget – timing around fiscal events materially affects outcomes

2026 run-rate implies the fastest year of legal-sector consolidation on record

M&A DEMAND

COMMON THEMES DRIVING M&A DEMAND IN SPECIALIST LAW FIRMS



REGULATION

The Legal Services Act 2007 and SRA's ABS licensing uniquely permit external/non-lawyer ownership in England & Wales - the enabling condition for PE entry



RECURRING, DEFENSIBLE REVENUE

Premium multiples for specialist services whilst deal volumes remain high for full-service firms



PE PIVOT TO SCALABLE NICHES

Capital is flowing towards scalable, process driven specialisms with succession pressure and defensible revenue



TECHNOLOGY & AI SCALABILITY

Acquirers cite AI/ technology as the mechanism to scale specialist niches with PE investment fuelling innovation



SUCCESSION PLANNING

Aging equity partners with limited internal succession are monetising goodwill by selling to consolidators



CROSS-SELLING PLATFORMS

Regional roll-ups bundle specialisms together to cross-sell across business and private clients

RECENT UK M&A ACTIVITY

A SELECTION OF UK LAW FIRM TRANSACTIONS IN 2026 HIGHLIGHT ACTIVITY REMAINS RIFE

MAR-26

Adeptio Law Group acquires Jordans Solicitors

First deal since PE-backed Adeptio's 2024 launch by Horizon Capital; group targets £100–120m revenue hub firms

MAY-26

Fletchers acquires clinical negligence & court protections team from Freeths

Backed by Sun Capital Partners, it has continued expansion by acquisitions of EMG, JE Bennett Law and Shoosmiths' serious injury practice

JUN-26

Higgs LLP acquires McKenzie Law

August Equity backed, Higgs, makes third acquisition of the year following investments in Vialex Limited and Navigator Employment Law in February

JUL-26

Orwins Law acquires Clarke Mairs

Backed by Aliter Capital, Orwin's plans to acquire further businesses to expand its regional coverage, strengthen existing services and add complementary services

AUG-26

MML Capital Partners acquires Maurant Group

The PE firm acquired a 27% shareholding to facilitate overseas expansion, lateral hires and AI technology

Lawfront acquires Field Seymour Parkes

£15m turnover, 85-strong Reading firm joins Brachers, Farleys, Nelsons and Slater Heelis in PE-backed platform

APR-26

Orwins Law acquires Clarkslegal LLP

Orwins (BBS Law) is pursuing law firm acquisitions with £3m-£10m revenues. This is its second acquisition since Aliter's investment

MAY-26

Lindsays WS Ltd is to acquire Dallas McMillan LLP

Glasgow based firm joins Shield & Kyd, MacLachlan & MacKenzie, RSB Macdonald, Aitken Nairn, Hadden Rankin and Miller Hendry

JUN-26

LDC to acquire Brady Solicitors

Investment to support the leading specialist property management law firm's next phase of growth

JUL-26

The Orwins Group acquired Milners and Roe Lawyers

Milners is a Yorkshire based full-service firm with four offices. Roe Lawyers is a central London boutique firm providing specialist criminal services

SEP-26

KEY BUYERS IN THE SECTOR

PE-BACKED CONSOLIDATORS ARE SETTING THE PACE BUT TRADE BUYERS REMAIN ACTIVE AND DISCIPLINED

PRIVATE EQUITY-BACKED PLATFORMS

Lawfront

Farleys, Nelsons, Brachers, Slater Heelis, Field Seymour Parkes and more - a national multi-brand roll-up backed by Blix

Adeptio
Law Group

Backed by Horizon Capital; targeting £100–120m revenue "hub" firms with c.£20m EBITDA

Orwins

Clarkslegal and Clarke Mairs acquired in quick succession - now c.200 staff, £28m revenue. Backed by Aliter Capital

fletchers
solicitors

Backed by Sun European Partners, focusing on clinical negligence, serious injury, and expanding aggressively via bolt-on private client practices

EXPRESS
SOLICITORS

Three bolt-ons in 2026 alone (Recovery Assist, Aegis Legal, Sorrymate) as it consolidates PI market share. Backed by Ufenaeu Capital Partners

Higgs^{LLP}

Backed by August Equity, Higgs has made 3 acquisitions so far in 2026 – Vialex Ltd, Navigator Employment Law, McKenzie Law

OAK LEGAL

Legal services platform backed by CKM3, providing capital and support to independent firms while enabling succession planning

TRADE ACQUIRERS

Gateley

Utilising corporate buying power to absorb commercial, specialist, and regional practices

Knights

26 acquisitions since IPO, including Thursfields, IBB Law and Birkett Long

Flint Bishop

Ambition to become top 100 legal firm in UK

CLYDE&Co

Routinely acquires smaller firms to bolster insurance litigation practice

TRADE STRATEGY

Large law firms: Focused on international expansion and consistent cross-border delivery.

Mid-market firms: Expanding national footprints to improve consistency and efficiency for nationwide clients.

Divestment: Many 'national' firms are exiting volume-based, low-margin, labour-intensive services.

VALUE DRIVERS

WHAT TODAY'S BUYERS ARE ACTUALLY PAYING FOR – MULTIPLES ARE NO LONGER AWARDED FOR SIZE ALONE



RECURRING, DOCUMENTED REVENUE

Firms with formal case-management systems & clean financial reporting without client concentration carry lower buyer-perceived risk



SCALABLE NICHES

Regional density and defensible specialisms (private wealth, commercial property, IP) are prized platform assets



SUCCESSION-PROOF LEADERSHIP

Practices not dependent on a single owner's relationships or memory command stronger terms



TECHNOLOGY & AI ADOPTION

Firms with a formal AI strategy are reported to be c.4x more likely to show measurable margin benefit



CULTURAL AND BRAND FIT

Multi-brand consolidators (Lawfront, Orwins) prize identity and local reputation - not just balance sheets



MARGINS AND EBITDA

Efficient case workflows, strong delegation ratios and tech investment drive margin uplifts with high normalised profit after partner remuneration

Source: Thomson Reuters Future of Professionals Report

VALUABLE SPECIALISMS

M&A ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO GROW FOR SPECIALIST LAW FIRMS

IP

● Rising

Patent & trademark attorney practices and IP-focused law firms handling prosecution, portfolio management and IP litigation

***DRIVERS:** High technical barriers to entry • Recurring renewal/annuity income • Defensible multi-jurisdictional revenue*

Specialist Employment

● Rising

Advisory and contentious employment law serving corporates, senior executives and individuals

***DRIVERS:** Employment Rights Act 2025 reforms • Recurring corporate client relationships • Scarcity value vs. generalist practices*

Specialist Family

● Rising

Divorce, matrimonial finance and children law specialists, often serving high-net-worth clients

***DRIVERS:** Counter-cyclical, recession-resilient demand • Fragmented supply of specialist firms • National scaling and brand potential*

Clinical Negligence / PI

● Maturing

Serious injury, medical negligence and personal injury claims work, typically contingency-fee driven

***DRIVERS:** High case volumes and referral pipelines • Valued on WIP/net assets, not always earnings • Market seen as approaching a consolidation ceiling*

Insurance Law

● Rising

Insurer-side defendant, coverage and claims-handling advisory work for institutional clients

***DRIVERS:** Recurring institutional client relationships • Cross-sell potential with healthcare and claims • Stable, contracted instruction flow*

Healthcare Law

● Emerging

NHS, healthcare regulatory and clinical advisory work for providers and institutions

***DRIVERS:** Explicitly flagged by PE trackers as a growth target • Cross-sell with insurance and clinical negligence • Regulatory complexity supports specialist fees*

Private Wealth & Estate Planning

● Rising

Wills, probate, trusts and estate administration for private and high-net-worth clients

***DRIVERS:** Ageing demographics and intergenerational wealth transfer • Recurring, data-driven revenue (stored wills) • AI-enabled scaling of probate processes*

Specialist Property

● Rising

Residential and commercial conveyancing and transactional property practices

***DRIVERS:** High-volume, process-driven transaction flow • Referral networks and cross-sell • AI/automation potential, but housing-market cyclicality*

Commercial Litigation

● Mixed

High-value disputes, group litigation and funded commercial claims work

***DRIVERS:** Demand for large-scale/group litigation • Third-party litigation funding capital • Regulatory scrutiny of funding models tempers risk*

RECENT M&A IN SPECIALIST LAW FIRMS

M&A ACTIVITY CONTINUES TO GROW FOR SPECIALIST LAW FIRMS

IP

● Rising

Key Buyers:



Murgitroyd:

ROUSE

Key Deals: Sept-25 | Rouse International Acquisition of Arnold & Siedsma, Apr-25 | Ipsilon's merger with NLO

Specialist Employment

● Rising

Key Buyers:



Littler



Key Deals: Jul-26 | Adeptio/FBC Manby Bowdler acquired The Specialist Law Group

Specialist Family

● Rising

Key Buyers:



fletchers
group



Key Deals: Nov-25 | Fletchers Group acquired Rayden Solicitors, Jan-26 | Stowe Family Law LLP acquired Unified Lawyers Pty Ltd

Clinical Negligence / PI

● Maturing

Key Buyers:



EXPRESS
SOLICITORS

Key Deals: May-26 | Express Solicitors acquired Smooth Law Ltd, May-26 | Fletchers Group acquired Freeth's Clinical Negligence and Court of Protection teams

Insurance Law

● Rising

Key Buyers:



Key Deals: Feb-26 | HF acquired Crawford & Company, Jul-26 | HF acquired Cardinal Claims Services, Ennis & Associates LLP and Matrix Claims Services Ltd

Healthcare Law

● Emerging

Key Buyers:



Key Deals: May-26 | HF's acquisition of Hempsons

Private Wealth & Estate Planning

● Rising

Key Buyers:



octopuslegacy

Key Deals: May-26 | Octopus Legacy acquired NewLaw Solicitors' private client team

Specialist Property

● Rising

Key Buyers:



Key Deals: Jul-26 | LDC's investment in Brady Solicitors

Commercial Litigation

● Mixed

Key Buyers:



Keller
Lenkner



COOPER PARRY CORPORATE FINANCE TEAM

OUR TEAM HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE SERVING THE LEGAL SECTOR



ANDY PARKER PARTNER

Andy leads Cooper Parry's Midlands Corporate Finance team, with 30 years' M&A experience, largely as a regional partner at PwC

E: andyp@cooperparry.com



ALEX YDLIBI DIRECTOR

Alex joined the Cooper Parry Corporate Finance team in 2021 having been a Fund Financial Controller at Equitix. Alex is a Chartered Accountant, qualifying at PwC

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SOPHIE TAYLOR-JACKSON ASSISTANT MANAGER

Sophie has recently joined Cooper Parry's deals team, following her role in management consulting in strategy and commercial. She is a Chartered Accountant

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SOME OF OUR LEGAL DEALS



- Brady Solicitors are a leading property specialist property management law firm
- We acted as buy side advisors to LDC for their investment
- The investment enables the firm to strengthen its specialist proposition through hires and acquisitions

- Nelsons is a leading firm of solicitors in the East Midlands based across Nottingham, Derby and Leicester
- We advised Nelsons on their sale to Lawfront allowing them to build on their strong reputation for high-quality care

Lawfront

NELSONS
Business Law · Personal Law · Investment



- Simply Conveyancing is one of the fastest growing conveyancers in the UK
- We advised Simply Conveyancing on their sale to Livingbridge, enabling them to bolster and improve technology, invest further in staff development and grow top line revenues

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THANK YOU

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