The first time you see a milky bloom creep across your double glazed unit, it feels minor, almost cosmetic. Then winter comes, the glass stays clammy, and your heating bill climbs by a noticeable chunk. The view dulls, and the room feels colder than it should. That mist isn't inside the room. It's inside the sealed unit, between the panes. By the time it appears, the seal has lost its airtight hold and moisture is finding its way in.

I've specified, installed, and repaired glazing on homes and small commercial buildings for years. When a window fogs up, owners usually ask two questions. Can you fix blown double glazing? And should you call the local firm down the road or a national brand with vans across the country? The honest answers are yes, often you can fix it without replacing the entire window, and it depends. The right choice hinges on budget, timescale, warranty, and how complicated the installation is. The goal here is to unpack those trade-offs and give you enough practical detail to decide confidently.

What "misted" and "blown" really mean

Double glazed units are made from two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar and sealed around the edges. The gap is dry, usually filled with argon, krypton, or simply dehydrated air, and there's a desiccant within the spacer to mop up trace moisture. When that edge seal breaks down, external air carries moisture into the cavity. On cooler days, vapor condenses on the inner faces, giving the telltale misted look. You might see it come and go as temperatures swing, but the trend only goes one way. The desiccant gets saturated, the fogging gets worse, and sometimes you'll spot mineral streaks or droplets that never fully disappear.

A "blown" unit is simply industry shorthand for this failed seal. The window frame might be perfectly sound. Handles and hinges might work fine. The failure is inside the sealed unit only. That's useful, because it means you often don't need to replace the whole window. You can swap the glass unit, reuse the frame, and restore performance for a fraction of the cost of a full frame change.

What can be repaired and what must be replaced

The internet is full of miracle fixes for misted double glazing repairs, from drilling the pane and injecting drying agents to pumping in gases. I've tested a handful of these on real-world properties. Temporary relief is possible in some cases, but the longevity is rarely satisfying. If you want a fix that lasts, replacing the failed sealed unit is the straightest path. It returns the window to its designed thermal performance, and you can specify upgraded glass while you're at it.

That said, a unit replacement need not mean a frame replacement. If the frame is not warped, rotten, or structurally compromised, swapping the insulated glazing unit (IGU) is routine work. The technician measures the rebate, orders a Conservatory Repairs new unit to size with correct spacer thickness, sightlines, and glazing beads, then installs it with fresh packers and sealants. A typical house will have some units that fail earlier than others. Sun exposure and installation quality are big drivers. South and west elevations often go first.

Edge cases matter. For instance, old timber frames might be worth refurbishing if the joinery is high quality and the building is listed. Cheap uPVC frames from twenty years ago might have degraded gaskets or brittle beads that make reglazing harder than you'd expect. Tilt-and-turn windows need care because the sash hardware tolerances are tight. Bay windows and large sliders may require two-person handling. None of this is insurmountable, but it affects how you choose a contractor and the quote you accept.

The economics: how much you should expect to pay

Prices vary by region, glass spec, and access. For a plain, clear double glazed replacement unit in a typical uPVC frame, I've seen homeowners pay between £80 and £150 per unit for small to medium sizes, supplied and fitted, with larger panoramas pushing £200 to £350. Triple glazing, laminated security glass, integral blinds, or shaped units will run higher. Scotland and the southeast of England tend to sit at opposite ends of the price spectrum. Commercial high-rises, tricky access, and heritage work add complexity and costs that don't fit neatly into household averages.

A full frame replacement, by contrast, jumps the price. Expect several hundred pounds per opening at a minimum, often much more. That's why understanding whether your frame is salvageable matters. If your frames are in good condition, a focused replacement of blown IGUs can restore looks and energy performance at a fraction of the cost of a full refit.

Hidden costs catch people out. Scaffolding for upper floors can be the surprise line item. Toughened safety glass is required near doors, in bathrooms, and within specific zones around floor level by building regulations, which adds cost. Lead times vary: off-the-shelf sizes exist, but most IGUs are made to order. A common wait is 5 to 10 working days, longer in peak season.

The case for local firms

Local specialists in double glazing repairs can be excellent for misted units. The best ones have serviced the same streets for decades and know which builders used which frames in which housing estates. They can spot a compatible bead profile from a photo and tell you whether your sash will need new hinges as well as fresh glass. When measuring, they use the subtle tricks that prevent call-backs, like allowing for settlement or specifying warm-edge spacers that match the original sightline.

The speed advantage is real. A small team with a workshop relationship nearby can measure on a Tuesday and fit the new unit the following week. If a pane arrives a few millimeters off, they resolve it without drama. The same fitter who quoted you is often the one who returns to carry out the work, and that continuity shows in the finished result. On aftercare, they are easy to find. If something goes wrong, they have a reputation to defend in the local community.

Local firms also tend to be flexible. Need to align the site visit around school runs or a tenant's schedule? They arrange it. Want to mix one upgraded low-E unit into the lounge while leaving secondary bedrooms for later? They'll work with that. If you prefer a human who can assess the whole window, not just sell you a replacement pane, local is hard to beat.

There are caveats. Some micro-businesses struggle with administrative polish. Paperwork can be thin, and warranties might be personal promises rather than formal documents backed by insurance. Not all local firms are created equal. You still need to check references and see recent work, ideally in the same frame type you own. If your job is large enough to stretch their capacity, lead times can balloon.

The case for national providers

National companies bring scale. They standardise processes, train fitters to a common method, and usually offer slick booking systems with SMS confirmations and online payments. If you own several rental properties across regions, one provider with coverage everywhere simplifies life. Their warranties are formal and often backed by insurance or long-standing corporate guarantees that feel more durable than a one-person promise.

On procurement, big firms buy at volume. In theory, this lowers unit costs. In practice, the savings are uneven. You might pay less for the glass but more in overhead. Their fitters can be excellent, but the person who surveys your site might not be the one who installs your units. That separation can lead to small errors, such as a miscommunicated sightline requirement, that show up on installation day. Larger firms tend to be less flexible with one-off requests and may push for full window replacement when a repair would do, because that’s how their sales targets are structured.

Scheduling runs on systems. You might get a fixed slot within a window of time rather than a conversation with the fitter. If an issue crops up after installation, the escalation might go through call centres, not the straightforward chat you get with a local owner-operator. Some national providers subcontract work to local teams, which can be fine, but it means your experience depends on the specific subcontractor who turns up.

Energy performance and the temptation to upgrade

When a unit fails and you are already ordering a replacement, you have a chance to improve performance. If your current glazing is an older 24 mm unit with basic air fill, you can step up to a 28 mm low-E, argon-filled unit with a warm-edge spacer. That small specification change can yield a noticeable improvement in U-value, especially on the coldest days. If your frame accepts it, consider laminated inner panes for sound reduction in noisy streets, or solar control glass for west-facing rooms that overheat in summer.

One of the most common misunderstandings I see is the expectation that a single new unit will transform a room’s temperature. The improvement is real but incremental. The whole envelope matters: draught seals, trickle

vents, and the thermal break in frames all play roles. Still, if you're already paying the call-out, the marginal cost to select a higher-spec IGU is usually modest. Ask the provider to list the exact spec on the quote. Look for centre-pane U-values, gas fill, and spacer type, not vague "A-rated glass" language.

Warranty, paperwork, and what actually protects you

Not all glazing work requires certification under building regulations, but good paperwork is your friend if you later sell the property. For replacement sealed units in existing frames, most regions don't demand a FENSA or Certass certificate in the same way full frame replacements do. Even so, you deserve a clear invoice itemising the glass specification, the dimensions, the safety rating where relevant (for example, toughened to BS EN 12150), and the warranty term for the unit.

Local firms sometimes offer a 2 to 5 year warranty on replacement units. National providers often quote 5 to 10 years. The number is only as useful as the company behind it. An insured warranty carries more weight. Read the small print. IGU warranties usually cover seal failure, not breakage due to impact or frame movement, and they don't cover condensation on the room side of the glass, which is a ventilation issue. If your frames are timber, movement with seasons can stress the new unit. Good installers use the right packers and setting blocks to mitigate that, and this is worth asking about at the survey stage.

Speed matters when moisture appears

A fogged unit isn't an emergency in the way a broken lock is, but delays have a cost. Persistent moisture inside the unit can etch the inner pane with mineral deposits, leading to permanent haze even on dry days. If you intend to leave the unit for months, at least inspect the beads and weep holes to make sure the frame sheds water properly. On timber frames, a continuously damp rebate invites rot. On uPVC, trapped moisture can encourage mold around the gaskets, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.

If you manage apartments or holiday lets, be mindful of guest perceptions. A misted patio door makes a place look tired, even if everything else is pristine. I've seen landlords lose bookings over photos that showed cloudy windows. In those cases, a local firm with a fast turnaround can be worth a slight premium.

How to judge the quality of a survey

No repair starts well without a precise survey. Watch for the surveyor who checks diagonals, not just height and width, and who confirms glass type with a detector rather than guessing. On safety glass, they should know the critical zones around doors and low sills. For trickier frames, they should pop a bead to inspect packers, gasket condition, and drainage. A quick phone photo of your bead profile sent before the visit can save time, since the installer can arrive with the right tools and any replacement gaskets if needed.

Ask how they will handle spacers and sightlines. A chunky spacer that sits too close to the visible edge looks poor from inside the room. Warm-edge spacers, often black or dark grey, need careful matching so they don't jump out visually. These details separate an acceptable repair from a seamless one.

When a repair becomes a replacement

There are cases where replacing only the IGU doesn't make sense. If the frame shows cracking, severe UV degradation, or the sashes have dropped so far that the locking points barely engage, the glass is the least of your worries. On older timber windows with peeling paint, rotten sills, or failed putty, reglazing can be done, but it

should be part of a bigger refurbishment that addresses the frame's health. Otherwise, the new unit is saddled with a tired structure that might move and split the fresh seal again.

Wide-span sliding doors and roof lights demand special consideration. A blown roof light leaks heat relentlessly and can drip onto finishes. Access and safety make these jobs more expensive, and many homeowners sensibly opt for a full unit or even frame replacement with improved thermal breaks. For conservatories built in the early 2000s, replacing multiple failed units might be an opportunity to rethink the roof glazing entirely, for example moving from polycarbonate to modern insulated panels or better solar control glass.

Local vs national: deciding factors that actually matter

Rather than a simplistic chart, I look at five practical levers you can pull. Each one changes the ideal choice slightly.

- Job complexity: Simple, like-for-like IGU swaps in accessible uPVC frames lean toward local firms with fast turnarounds. Complex setups, high or difficult access, or multi-property portfolios lean toward nationals with formal processes and safety paperwork.
- Timescale: If you need it next week, local usually wins. Nationals can match speed, but it often depends on depot capacity.
- Warranty appetite: If you value a long, documented warranty with clear escalation, a national brand can feel safer. A reputable local firm with insured guarantees is a strong middle ground.
- Budget and value: Locals often sharpen their pencil on small jobs. Nationals may deliver better unit prices but carry overhead. Compare like with like on glass spec and installation scope.
- Relationship and aftercare: If you want the same person to survey and install, local is the sure bet. If you want an account you can scale across properties, national systems make life easier.

A short homeowner's checklist

- Take clear photos of the misted units, the frame material, and a close-up of the glazing bead.
- Measure visible glass size and overall opening, then share for a rough quote, but expect a site survey for final pricing.
- Ask for the IGU specification in writing: thickness, gas fill, low-E coating, spacer type, and safety rating where required.

- Clarify lead time, warranty terms, and whether any access equipment or scaffolding is needed.
- Confirm who handles disposal of the old unit and how they will protect flooring and finishes during the swap.

What installation day looks like

A well-run replacement takes under an hour for a typical casement window, a little longer for large panes or awkward access. The fitter removes the glazing beads carefully to avoid damage, supports the sash if needed, and lifts out the old unit. They clean the rebate, check drainage slots, and set new glazing packers to carry the load properly. The new unit slides in, centered with even sightlines. Beads go back in order, joints tight. A bead of sealant may be applied where the original design calls for it, especially on timber. Before leaving, the fitter should open and close the sash, confirm locking points, and wipe any fingerprints from the glass.

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If the installer rushes, common mistakes show later: a unit sitting on soft packers that compress unevenly, beads that rattle, or a sash that binds slightly. Take five minutes to check operation before they drive off. Good installers welcome the check, because it avoids a second visit.

Pitfalls I see repeatedly

Homeowners sometimes accept the lowest quote assuming all glass is equal. It isn’t. Cheap spacer bars and sloppy sealing are the parts you never see, and they are what fail first. I’ve revisited jobs within two years where bargain units misted again because the edge seal wasn’t up to scratch. Another common pitfall involves safety glass. A non-safety unit installed in a critical zone might pass unnoticed until a breakage happens. The liability cost dwarfs any saving.

Then there is condensation on the room side of the glass. Replacing a blown unit will not cure poor ventilation. If you habitually dry laundry indoors, or you’ve blocked trickle vents because of draughts, room-side condensation can persist. The test is simple. If you can wipe it off with your finger, it’s not the sealed unit. Improving ventilation, using extractor fans, and maintaining a steady background temperature are part of the solution.

What I tell friends who ask for a recommendation

If your job is a handful of misted panes in standard frames, ring two local firms with solid reviews and one national for comparison. Share photos, get the specs in writing, and read beyond the headline price. If the local quote is higher but the spec is better and the lead time shorter, I usually lean local. If you are coordinating across several addresses, need a single point of contact, and want a long warranty documented to the letter, the national approach earns its keep.

Either way, don’t be shy about asking detailed questions. A good provider will talk through gas fills, spacer choices, and safety zones without flinching. You’re not buying a mystery box. You’re buying a made-to-measure component that should last a decade or more if chosen and installed with care.

Quick notes for landlords and managing agents

Vacant periods are ideal for scheduling, but you can swap units in occupied properties with minimal disruption. Give tenants 30 to 60 minutes per opening. Protect furnishings, and be clear about noise. In multi-unit blocks, coordinate access so a fitter can move efficiently from flat to flat. Ask for a single consolidated warranty document listing apartment numbers and IGU specs. If you manage student lets, book for mid-morning during term when tenants are out. I've saved entire afternoons by avoiding lunchtime bottlenecks and aligning with building access control.

Can you fix blown double glazing without replacing the unit?

It is possible to mitigate symptoms temporarily. Some specialists offer de-fogging services where they drill, vent, dry, and reseal. I've seen these hold for months, occasionally longer, but they rarely restore the original insulating value. The argon fill is gone, the desiccant is spent, and the cavity won't be truly sealed again. If budget forces a stopgap for a property you plan to refurbish soon, de-fogging can buy time. If you want a durable result and full thermal performance, a new sealed *Double Glazing Repairs* unit is the honest solution.

A final word on expectations

Misted double glazing repairs are straightforward when approached with clear goals. You want transparent glass again, a comfortable room, and a bill that feels proportionate. You also want to avoid doing the same job twice. Whether you go local or national, the fundamentals don't change. Specify the right unit, install it carefully, and back it with credible paperwork. Take the opportunity to lift performance where you can. If you do those things, you'll be staring through sharp, dry panes next winter, not at a cloudy reminder that this was put off too long.

And if you are weighing local versus national, trust the shape of your project. Small and personal leans toward local craftsmanship. Large and repeatable leans toward national infrastructure. The best outcome is the one that fits your home, your timeline, and your appetite for aftercare. That judgment, not the logo on the van, is what delivers a solid, lasting repair.