If you have a window that fogs between the panes, looks permanently smeared, or feels colder than the rest of the house, there is a good chance the sealed unit has failed. People often call it a blown window, because the perimeter seal has blown out and let moisture creep into the insulating gap. It is a common problem in older uPVC, timber, and aluminium frames. It is also solvable, though not always in the way marketing flyers suggest. The right fix depends on what has failed, how the window is constructed, and what you expect from your home's insulation over the next decade.

I have replaced and repaired hundreds of glazed units in lived-in homes, rentals, and light commercial buildings. Some looked like milk bottles every damp morning, others only fogged during a cold snap. A few had crystal clear panes but leaked heat like a vent because the spacer and gas fill were long gone. The core questions are simple: can you fix blown double glazing, what does it cost, and will the repair genuinely improve insulation?

What "blown" really means

A double glazed unit is two panes of glass separated by a spacer bar that creates a cavity. That cavity is dried with desiccant to absorb residual moisture. Good units are gas filled, typically argon, sometimes krypton in high-performance setups. The glass edges are sealed with butyl or hot-melt compound, then often finished with a secondary polysulphide or polyurethane seal for strength. When the perimeter seal fails, ambient air and moisture enter the cavity. Once the desiccant saturates, you start to see condensation between the panes. That is your tell-tale blown sign.

Failure has several common causes. UV and heat pump energy into the seals over years until they harden and crack. Poor drainage in the sash or frame lets water sit against the unit edge. Spacer bars without "warm edge" technology conduct heat out, causing thermal stress cycles that work the seal harder. Installers who bow frames or overpack glazing can introduce mechanical stress that shows up a few seasons later when the house settles and the glass shifts.

When you notice misting for the first time, the unit has usually been compromised for months. The visible fog is late-stage failure, not the start.

Can you fix blown double glazing without replacing it?

This is where marketing claims and practical outcomes part ways. You will see services offering to drill tiny holes, vent or vacuum the cavity, inject alcohol or anti-fog agents, then fit micro-vents or plugs. It can clear the misting for a while, particularly in milder climates where the dew point rarely dips into the cavity temperature range. I have tried these methods on budget-limited projects and in holiday lets where visual clarity mattered more than top-tier insulation. They buy time. They do not restore the unit's original insulating performance.

The reason is physical. Once the perimeter seal fails and the desiccant saturates, the unit can no longer hold a stable, dry environment. Argon, if it was there, has leaked. The thermal performance that depends on a dry, low-conductivity gas is compromised. Venting may reduce visible condensation by equalising humidity, but the cavity now contains ambient air that carries moisture and conducts heat more readily than argon. If your goal is to regain the U-value the window had when new, vent-and-plug systems will not get you there.

That said, there are edge cases where a de-misting service makes sense. I renovated an older rental terrace where three upstairs windows showed mild fogging only on Cat Flap Installation cold mornings. The landlord planned a full window upgrade within 18 months but wanted them to look respectable. We used a de-mist service on those three units and saved roughly half the cost of replacement sealed units. They stayed clear enough for that period.

Heating bills did not improve, but the tenant stopped reporting “dirty looking windows.” It was an aesthetic fix with a defined lifespan.

If you want both clarity and thermal performance, you replace the sealed unit.

Replacing the sealed unit vs replacing the whole window

A lot of homeowners worry replacement means ripping out frames. In most cases, you can keep the existing frame and swap only the insulated glass unit, often called the IGU. This is standard work for competent glazing firms and good mobile installers.

If your frames are sound, the seals and beads intact, and the hinges or stays in good shape, replacing just the IGU offers excellent value. You can also step up performance at the same time by specifying a low-e coated glass, warm-edge spacer, and argon fill. Even in an older uPVC frame, a modern A-rated unit will outperform what was installed 10 or 15 years ago. The change is noticeable in winter. The internal pane feels warmer to the touch, overnight condensation on the room-side glass drops, and draughts from convective downdrafts reduce because the glass surface temperature stays higher.

Whole window replacement, including frames, makes sense when you have multiple issues at once: warped sashes that do not close flush, rotten timber beads, failed mullion drainage, broken thermal breaks in aluminium, or frame movement that has opened up around the brickwork. If the frames are past it, the best IGU in the world cannot perform in a leaky pocket.

How to tell what you actually need

Most people spot the fog and assume the glass is the only problem. Before ordering an IGU, I run a quick, practical diagnostic on site.

- Check the frame for square and the sash for true alignment. A simple diagonal measurement and a visual gap check on the opening side reveal if the hardware has sagged.
- Inspect the glazing beads and gaskets. If beads are brittle, cracked, or missing clips, they may not hold the new unit square, which can lead to early failure.
- Look at drainage slots. Blocked or absent drainage traps water against the unit edge, accelerating seal failure. If the slots are covered by paint or clogged with debris, fixing that is part of the repair.
- Test the thermal performance with a handheld infrared thermometer on a cold day. Compare the suspect pane to an adjacent pane of similar size and aspect. If the blown unit reads several degrees colder on the inside surface, expect a tangible comfort gain from upgrade.
- Confirm glass spec. Many older units lack low-e coating. A simple low-e detector or a torch-and-card test can indicate coating presence. If there is no low-e, a new IGU provides a clear upgrade beyond just de-misting.

That half hour of checks keeps people from buying the wrong fix. If the sash has dropped 4 mm at the hinge and no longer seats on its compression gasket, that cold edge you feel is a draught problem, not just a glass problem. Adjusting hinges, replacing gaskets, and then upgrading the unit brings the whole assembly back to spec.

What a proper IGU replacement involves

On a typical uPVC casement, you remove beads in sequence, lift out the old unit, clear packers, clean down the rebates, check drainage, set new glazing packers to carry the weight on the hinge side and bottom, drop in the new unit, re-pack to square, and refit beads. With timber, you remove external beads or putty, often cut free with

care to avoid damage, and refit with new timber beads and security glazing tape. Aluminium has system-specific wedge gaskets and pressure plates that require the correct order.

It is not hard, but it is exacting. Two common mistakes lead to callbacks. Poor packer placement that leaves the unit sitting unevenly, and dirty rebates that hold moisture against the fresh seal. The first can strain the new unit and distort the sash, the second shortens the new unit’s life. Decent installers carry multiple packer sizes, nitrile gloves for clean handling, and are fussy about bead fit. The difference shows three winters later when the windows are still performing like new.

For sash windows with slim double glazing, replacements are trickier because the rebates are shallow and the putty line narrow. Here, specialist made-to-measure slimline IGUs with warm-edge spacers help, but the margin for error is small. Vent-and-plug de-misting is almost never worth it on these because their seals are inherently more delicate. If a sash is historic, I often discuss secondary glazing as an alternative.

The insulation gain you can expect

Most blown units I remove have lost their gas fill and behave closer to air-filled units, sometimes worse because of continual moisture exchange. A typical 1990s air-filled unit without low-e might have a centre-pane U-value around 2.7 W/m²K. A modern argon-filled unit with soft-coat low-e and a warm-edge spacer can come in around 1.0 to 1.2 W/m²K centre-pane, and whole-window U-values around 1.3 to 1.6 depending on frame. Translating that to comfort, you feel it as a warmer inner glass surface on cold nights. That reduces downdrafts and the sense of a cold area near windows.

Energy savings vary because glazing is just part of the envelope. In a semi-detached with 15 to 20 square metres of glazing, upgrading blown units to modern A-rated IGUs can trim annual heating use by a few percent to perhaps 10 percent, depending on the starting point. The bigger payoff for many households is less condensation, fewer mould-prone corners, and rooms that hold steady temperature without the heater kicking on as often.

If your heating is electric, the savings are more visible on your bill. If you heat with gas and already have a decent envelope, expect steady comfort more than dramatic cost reductions. Be wary of anyone promising massive energy savings from glass alone without looking at loft insulation, air leakage, and controls.

Good glass specifications for replacements

When people request Double Glazing Repairs, I guide them to a short, coherent spec rather than falling into alphabet soup. Good, all-around value looks like this: soft-coat low-e on the inner pane, 16 mm cavity, argon fill, warm-edge spacer, and toughened glass where regulations require it, like near doors, in bathrooms, or within 800 mm of the floor. If street noise bothers you, consider one pane in a different thickness, like 4 mm and 6 mm, to detune sound transmission. If summer overheating is a problem on a south or west elevation, a mild solar-control low-e helps.

People sometimes ask about krypton or triple glazing in older frames. Krypton narrows the cavity while preserving performance, useful in heritage sashes where you cannot fit 24 mm units. It is more expensive and availability can be patchy. Triple glazing only works if the frame and hardware are designed for the extra weight and depth. In a standard uPVC frame that was meant for 28 mm double glazing, cramming in a triple unit often creates sealing problems and hinge stress. If you want triple, plan a frame upgrade.

Repair options if you cannot replace immediately

Budgets and timelines are real. If a window is blown and the heating season is on you, there are interim steps that help. Improving the frame seal by replacing tired compression gaskets can cut drafts considerably. Adjusting hinges so the sash bites evenly on the seals often makes a blown window feel less cold by stopping air bypass. Heavy, well-fitted curtains with a close-sided track form a still-air layer at night and reduce convective drafts. Secondary glazing, especially magnetic or clip-in acrylic panels, surprises many people with how effective it is as a temporary measure. It creates a new dry cavity on the room side and can reduce noise too.

These steps do not fix the blown unit, but they control the symptoms until you are ready to order proper Misted Double Glazing Repairs that replace the glass.

Costs, timelines, and what changes the price

Prices vary by region, access, and glass spec. As a ballpark, a straightforward IGU replacement in a standard uPVC casement, say 600 by 900 mm, can land in the range of modest hundreds per unit, including supply and fit. Larger panes, toughened or laminated glass, and special shapes go up from there. Slimline heritage units are a different economics altogether because of niche manufacture.

Lead time for units is often five to ten working days from survey in a normal market. During busy seasons, or when low-iron glass or special coatings are needed, two to three weeks is common. Fit time per window is short. A two-person team can change several windows in a morning if access is easy.

Things that add cost or complexity include externally beaded windows on upper floors without safe access, timber frames that need bead rebuilding, and aluminium systems with pressure plates that have been overpainted or corroded. If the frame needs repair, I price that separately rather than burying surprises in a glazed-unit quote. It keeps expectations clean.

Avoiding repeat failures

I have seen new units fail in under five years when the underlying cause was not addressed. Most early failures trace to water sitting against the unit edge or mechanical stress from poor packing. Make sure drainage slots are clear and not blocked by weather seals or paint. On uPVC, ensure the glazing packers carry the glass weight at the hinge side, not floating on the bottom. In timber, use proper security glazing tape and breathable paint or primer behind beads, not just silicone blobs that trap water.

Frame cleaning helps too. Garden jet washers aimed at windows force water into places it does not belong. Avoid aggressive washing at bead lines. If you live near the coast, rinsing salt from frames with a gentle hose once a month does more for longevity than blasting them twice a year.

When a de-misting service makes sense

The term Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing pulls in a lot of people who want a quick, low-cost fix. There are times a de-mist service is honest and useful. A property going on the market where three units fog on damp mornings but you need it to present well, a holiday let that faces a wholesale window upgrade next off-season, or a conservatory where half the roof units are fogged and you need a single summer of clear views before changing the entire roof system. In those situations, you understand the limits, you pay less, and you accept that insulation will not improve.

Be wary if the pitch promises restored thermal performance. It will not match a factory-sealed IGU. Also, ask about the warranty. Many de-mist warranties cover visibility only, not energy performance. Compare that to reputable IGU suppliers who typically offer 5 to 10 years on the sealed unit.

Frames, seals, and the human factor

I once replaced six misted units in a 12-year-old estate home. The homeowner had already tried a de-mist service on two units, which cleared for one season. The house sat on a slight north-facing slope, and the prevailing rain soaked the window faces all winter. The real culprit turned out to be tiny cover trims the original ***cat flap installation service*** installer had siliconed over the drainage slots to hide a gap. Water pooled in the rebate, the seals deteriorated early, and the units died. We cleared and reshaped the slots, refitted tidy end caps, used warm-edge units with soft-coat low-e, and added trickle vents to control moisture inside. Those windows stayed clear and warm through five winters before the owner sold. If we had only swapped glass again, the problem would have returned.

That story is common. Windows live in a system. Fixing blown glass without addressing water management and gasket health is like changing a tyre with a nail still in the road.

Noise, security, and comfort upgrades at the same time

Since you are investing in new units, consider what else you want to improve. Acoustic comfort is high on the list for homes near roads or flight paths. A simple change such as using asymmetric panes, or specifying an acoustic laminate for the outer pane, can earn a noticeable drop in traffic roar. You do not need to reframe the window to enjoy this benefit. Security glass like laminated inner panes resists impact and blocks easy entry even if the glass is cracked. It also filters UV, which helps with fading.

If nighttime overheating bothers you in summer, combine low-e with a gentle solar-control coating. It will shave peak gains without making winter rooms chilly. Aim for balance. Overspecifying solar-control in a north-facing room makes little sense.

Choosing the right specialist

Double Glazing Repairs as a service covers a wide spectrum of skill. You want someone who talks in specifics, not slogans. They should measure every aperture, identify glass specs, and discuss drainage. Ask what spacers they use, whether the units are gas filled, and what warranty comes with the sealed units. A good installer will point out where your frames need minor remedial work and price it transparently. If they insist on whole window replacements when your frames are sound, get a second opinion.

For Misted Double Glazing Repairs, ask how they handle stubborn putty or external beads, whether they can match sightlines, and how they protect floors and sills indoors. For de-misting services, ask what will happen if the fog returns within a season and whether they drill from inside or outside. Protecting the cavity from ongoing moisture ingress is as much about detailing as it is about drilling a neat hole.

Maintenance that keeps new units clear and efficient

New IGUs do not need pampering, but a few habits extend their life. Keep internal humidity in check during winter with ventilation or intermittent extractor use in kitchens and baths. If you dry clothes indoors, do it in a room with an extractor or near a cracked window. Clean frames and bead lines gently with mild detergent, not harsh solvents. Clear weep holes at the base of frames each season. If you repaint timber beads, leave the drainage path open and avoid bridging the putty or seal with continuous paint that traps water.

Hinges and stays appreciate a tiny drop of light oil once a year. Handles need the odd tighten. None of this is glamorous, but it is the difference between a unit that hits its 10-year warranty and one that clouds at year six.

What about triple glazing or secondary glazing?

Homeowners sometimes see a blown unit as a trigger to leap to triple glazing. In the right frames and climates, triple glazing is excellent. It quiets noise, holds heat, and stabilises internal glass temperatures. Yet dropping triple units into frames designed for double is often a false economy. The extra weight stresses hinges, and the overall assembly may not seal correctly. If you want triple, plan a new frame with proper thermal breaks and hardware.

Secondary glazing remains a smart, often underappreciated option. In period homes where you want to preserve original sashes, a well-fitted secondary pane creates a true air gap and dramatically reduces drafts and noise. It will not fix a failed double glazed unit, but it can be a better investment than a de-mist when the frame or conservation rules complicate IGU replacement.

Straight answers to common questions

Can you fix blown double glazing permanently without replacing the sealed unit? Not in a way that restores factory performance. You can clear the fog temporarily with de-misting methods, but insulation will not return to spec.

Is replacing the IGU disruptive? Not much. For most windows, swapping a sealed unit takes under an hour. There is dust from bead removal on timber, but careful installers contain it.

Will new IGUs lower my energy bills? Usually, but the effect depends on your home. Expect more stable room temperatures and less condensation as the first wins, with bill savings following the proportion of glass in your envelope and the old spec you are replacing.

Do warm-edge spacers and argon make a noticeable difference? Yes. Warm-edge spacers lift inner-edge glass temperatures several degrees, which reduces condensation and edge-of-glass chill. Argon reduces conductive heat

loss through the cavity.

How long should a new unit last? A decent unit, properly installed with good drainage, should serve 10 to 20 years. Coastal exposure, strong sun, and poor drainage shorten that. Frames that move a lot or are packed badly also cut life.

CST Double Glazing Repairs
4 Mill Ln
Cottesmore
Oakham
LE15 7DL

Phone: +44 7973 682562

Bringing it together

Blown double glazing is disappointing, but it is not a disaster. The fog you see is a symptom of a failed seal and a damp cavity. You have three real paths. Live with the haze for a while, clear it temporarily with de-misting knowing insulation will not improve, or replace the sealed unit and use the opportunity to upgrade the glass specification. If the frames are in good shape, replacing the IGU is straightforward and cost effective. If frames are failing, whole window replacement is smarter than feeding new glass into a leaky shell.

A thoughtful repair looks beyond the glass to drainage, packers, gaskets, and hardware. That attention keeps the new unit clear and efficient for years. Whether you call it Double Glazing Repairs, Misted Double Glazing Repairs, or simply window work, the aim is comfort that you can feel every cold morning, fewer damp corners, and a house that holds its heat with less fuss.