

Walk down any street on a chilly morning and you will spot it straight away: a window that looks as if it has been fogged from the inside, a soft halo of moisture that never quite wipes away. That is the telltale sign of a blown double glazed unit. Homeowners ask me the same question every winter, often with a hint of dread about cost and disruption. Can you [Double Glazing Repairs](#) fix blown double glazing without replacing the unit? The honest answer is, sometimes. Whether it is sensible, cost effective, and durable depends on why it failed, how long it has been misted, and what you expect from the window in terms of comfort and energy savings.

I have worked on hundreds of these across houses from the 1970s right up to new builds that developed issues after only a few years. The solutions range from quick restorative treatments to full glass replacement. There is no one-size-fits-all playbook, so let's unpack the options with the same practical eye I use onsite.

What “blown” actually means

Double glazing is a sealed insulating glass unit, usually two panes separated by a spacer bar and a cavity, filled with air or an inert gas like argon. The perimeter is bonded with a primary sealant around the spacer and a secondary edge seal, typically polysulfide or polyurethane. The spacer often contains a desiccant to trap residual moisture.

A blown unit is one where the edge seal has failed. Moist air migrates into the cavity, the desiccant saturates, and you end up with condensation or a permanent mist between the panes. Sometimes you will see droplets tracking down inside; other times a uniform white haze or mineral deposits etched on the glass. Once the desiccant is spent, the fog lingers because the cavity cannot dry out on its own.

From a performance perspective, a failed seal undermines insulation. You may notice cold downdrafts near the glazing, more heat loss, or even a faint whistle if the failure is accompanied by gaps in the gasket. In older units, the low-e coating might still reflect heat, but the lost gas fill and moisture reduce the overall U-value.

How to confirm a blown unit before calling for Double Glazing Repairs

People sometimes mistake surface condensation for a blown unit. Surface condensation forms on the room-side pane when humid indoor air hits a cold surface, very common in kitchens and bathrooms. If a cloth wipes it off from either inside or outside, the sealed unit is not blown. If the condensation sits between the panes and cannot be reached, you have an internal failure.

I keep a few simple checks:

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- Clean both faces of the glass thoroughly, then inspect in daylight from an angle. If the fog remains behind the glass, it is inside the cavity.
- Shine a torch at night and look for a double reflection. A blown unit often has a diffuse secondary reflection due to haze inside.

- Gently press the glazing at the gasket. A perished or shrunk gasket can let water into the frame, but that is different from a failed edge seal inside the sealed unit.

If you are still unsure, a glazier can use a dew point meter and edge probe to assess moisture in the cavity and inspect the spacer for deformities.

Why units fail in the first place

Age is the big culprit. Many units from the 1990s and early 2000s have lifespans of 10 to 20 years. By the time the house needs a second coat of paint, the seals are often on borrowed time. Heat, UV exposure, and movement in the frame stress the edge seals. In uPVC frames, expansion and contraction are pronounced on south and west elevations. Timber frames introduce their own challenge if water gets behind the beads and sits against the unit edge.

Poor installation accelerates failure. I have pulled beads off windows where the packers were missing or badly placed, which leaves the glass bearing directly on the frame and puts extra shear on the seal. Silicone smeared across the edge of the unit can dissolve secondary seals if the chemistry is wrong. Trickle vents left closed all winter spike internal humidity, pushing moisture gradients that test any marginal seal.

Occasionally, manufacturing defects show up. A spacer with insufficient desiccant, a patchy low-e coating, or a weak secondary seal can lead to early misting within a few years. Warranty claims are worth pursuing on relatively new units.

What people mean by “repair” for misted double glazing

Search for Misted Double Glazing Repairs and you will find two broad approaches. First, the intervention that keeps your existing unit, sometimes called defogging or de-misting. Second, the replacement of just the glass sealed unit, leaving the frames in place. The third, full frame replacement, is rarely needed unless the frames are rotted, warped, or poorly insulated.

When people ask Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing, they often imagine a quick fix that restores clarity and insulation without ordering new glass. That is possible in certain cases, but it requires realistic expectations.

Defogging: what it does and what it does not

Defogging involves drilling one or two tiny holes through the outer pane at the top and often the bottom corner, venting the cavity, flushing it with dry air or an alcohol-based solution, and then inserting a moisture-absorbing capsule or valve. The installer then plugs the holes with vents or clear plugs. Over a day or two, the window clears as moisture evaporates and escapes. I have seen stubborn units take a week in damp weather.

Done well, defogging restores the view and removes that milky look. It can be a lifeline when you want the appearance back quickly, say, to sell a house or to tidy up a rental property without major spend. It is less disruptive than replacing the unit, and on accessible ground-floor windows, it can be completed in 30 to 60 minutes per pane.

However, it does not restore the original sealed environment. The argon or krypton is gone and will not be replaced. The U-value will be worse than a healthy factory-sealed unit. The holes and micro-vents, while discreet, are still holes, and although they are designed to keep liquid water out, they change the way the cavity behaves. In windy or coastal settings, that can mean moisture fluctuations reappearing seasonally. Also, if there is etching

on the glass from mineral deposits that formed while it was misted, clarity will improve but never be perfect. That glass damage is permanent.

I generally recommend defogging on three conditions: the unit is otherwise sound with no visible seal delamination, the frame is difficult to re-bead without damage or the glass is an unusual shape that would take weeks to source, and the client understands it as a cosmetic and partial thermal fix. If you are hoping for the same thermal performance as new, you will be disappointed.



Replacing the sealed unit: the middle ground that solves the actual fault

Swapping the insulated glass unit is the standard path for most Double Glazing Repairs. You keep your frames, whether uPVC, timber, or aluminum, and just replace the glass sandwich. The glazier measures the visible glass size, checks the rebate depth, spacer thickness, and any glazing bars, then orders a unit matched for thickness and coating. Low-e coatings, warm edge spacers, and argon can be spec'd to improve the original performance.

Turnaround times vary by supplier and region, typically 3 to 10 working days for a rectangular unit. Toughened safety glass, large pieces, or shaped bays can take longer. On installation day, beads and wedge gaskets come off, packers are checked or replaced, drainage holes are cleared, and the new unit is bedded and clipped back. For a typical casement sash, the process is under an hour.

Replacing the unit deals with the root cause, which is the failed edge seal. The new unit restores the cavity integrity and thermal performance. If the frame is in good condition, this route offers the best balance of longevity and cost. In most homes I see, 70 to 90 percent of blown units are handled this way.

Cost-wise, it depends on size and spec. As a broad guide in the UK, a small bathroom unit might run £80 to £120 supplied and fitted. A standard lounge window section could be £120 to £220 per unit. Triple glazing, laminated panes, or integral blinds will push the price up. Prices in other regions follow similar patterns with local labor and glass supply affecting totals. It is often cheaper than homeowners fear, especially compared to full window replacement.



Where full window replacement makes sense

Sometimes the frames are the problem. If the uPVC is brittle, yellowed, and warped, or the timber has wet rot, you can replace the glass and still have drafts and poor closing lines. I have also seen older aluminum frames with no thermal break, where fresh double glazed units barely move the needle on comfort.

In those cases, replacing the entire window can be the sensible investment. Modern frames have better weather seals, improved multi-chamber profiles, and factory-set compression. If you plan to stay in the property for years and value energy savings, jumping to A-rated or better windows offers clear gains. You can still stage the work, tackling the worst rooms first and spreading the cost.

How long will a repaired or replaced unit last?

A defogged unit is living on borrowed time. I have seen them stay clear for 2 to 5 years, sometimes longer in sheltered elevations. In harsh exposures, they can mist again within a couple of winters, particularly if the beads and gaskets are loose. Think of defogging as buying time rather than resetting the clock.

A new sealed unit, properly installed, should match factory expectations. Manufacturers often quote 5 to 10 years on the sealed unit, and many last 15 or more. Longevity improves with warm edge spacers, quality secondary seals, and frames that manage water well. Installers who pack correctly and keep units isolated from the frame's wet zones make a big difference.

Hidden pitfalls I watch for during Misted Double Glazing Repairs

Every house has its quirks. A few practical lessons help avoid repeat problems:

- Check drainage. Many uPVC frames have weep holes that clog with insects or dirt. If water cannot escape, it pools against the glass edge and accelerates failure. Clear them during any repair.
- Respect packer placement. Packers carry the weight and keep the unit square. If they are missing at the hinge side of an opening sash, the sash can drop and stress the unit. I have returned to jobs that failed early because someone skimped on packers.
- Manage indoor humidity. Even perfect units will sweat on the room side if humidity stays above 60 percent in winter. Extractor fans, trickle vents, and small behavioral changes help. Without that, every cold morning

becomes a condensation test.

- Watch coating orientation. Low-e coatings belong on a specific surface within the sandwich. A wrongly oriented unit still looks fine but performs worse, and can give odd color shifts. Use suppliers that label clearly and fitters that verify.

These details separate a quick fix from a durable repair.

When small fixes do help without replacing anything

Sometimes the culprit is not the sealed unit at all. I have cured a “foggy window” complaint by reseating a dropped sash, replacing perished wedge gaskets, and resealing external beads where wind-driven rain was forced behind the glass. In timber windows, a cracked glazing bead can funnel water along the edge. Sorting those issues will not clear internal misting, but it can prevent the next unit from failing and can stop surface condensation or drafts that make a room feel colder than it is.

If your windows rattle, if you feel air movement around the beads, or if you see water inside the frame after heavy rain, address those frame issues alongside any glass work.

Energy and comfort, not just clarity

I often meet clients who have lived with a misted lounge window for a year because they assume it is a purely cosmetic problem. Then we replace the sealed unit and they ring two weeks later saying the room finally holds heat. A blown unit can add the equivalent of a persistent cold spot on a wall. Over a heating season, that matters.

If you are replacing units anyway, consider upgrading to modern specs. Low-e glass with argon fill and warm edge spacers can drop U-values significantly compared to older units. In a typical semi, replacing the worst six to eight panes often costs a few hundred pounds and noticeably improves comfort. You do not always need to re-glaze the entire house to see a benefit.

A simple decision framework

Homeowners like a straight answer on whether to repair or replace. This quick logic helps:

- If the unit is misted inside the cavity and looks etched or has been foggy for months, replace the sealed unit.
- If the unit is newly misted, clarity matters more than thermal performance, and access is difficult or lead times are long, consider defogging to buy time.
- If the frame is compromised, or you plan a long stay and want better energy performance, price full window replacement for the affected elevations.
- If the issue is surface condensation or drafts around beads, address ventilation and gaskets first.

A good glazier will walk you through these options without pushing the most expensive route. I carry defogging gear, but I do not sell it as a cure-all. It has a place, as long as the client treats it as a stopgap.

What to expect during a professional visit

On a typical callout for [Misted Window Repairs](#) Double Glazing Repairs, I start with a moisture and visual inspection, check frame integrity, then offer options with ballpark costs. If you opt for new sealed units, we measure precisely: visible sightline, overall thickness, spacer width, and safety requirements near doors and low thresholds. We photograph bead profiles to ensure the replacement fits.



For defogging, we mask the area, drill clean holes through the outer pane only, flush and vent, then plug with a neat button or valve. We wipe down and leave you with drying times. You might see a slight halo for a day or two as residual moisture clears.

For unit replacement, the return visit is when the new glass arrives. We protect floors, pop off beads, swap the unit, re-pack, and re-fit beads. On opening sashes, we adjust hinges and keeps so the sash seals evenly. Before leaving, we check weep holes and inspect for any minor scuffs on the frame.

Cost, warranties, and sensible expectations

Prices swing with size, spec, and region, so treat any numbers as ranges. Defogging often falls between £60 and £100 per pane for ground-floor standard sizes. Replacement sealed units commonly range from £80 to £220 fitted, more for large picture windows or toughened safety units. Full window replacements involve frame materials, hardware, and building regulation compliance, so they start much higher per opening.

Warranties on defogging are typically short, 6 to 24 months, focused on clarity rather than thermal claims. Replacement units often carry 5- to 10-year sealed unit warranties, though installer workmanship guarantees vary. Keep paperwork, especially if you plan to sell.

Expect an honest discussion about what “fixed” means. Clear and comfortable is achievable. Making an old, sun-baked south elevation behave like a brand-new A-rated window without replacing anything is not.

A brief look at DIY

I see the occasional DIY attempt: dehumidifier pellets taped to vent holes, or a drill hole at the top only. These can clear fog in the short term but often leave streaks and draw in dust. Drilling the wrong pane risks safety glass shattering. Worse, drilling compromises any lingering warranty. DIY makes the most sense on scrap-value units you plan to replace anyway, as a learning exercise rather than a serious repair.

Measuring for replacement is another DIY path. If you are confident with glazing beads and safe handling, you can order units yourself. The critical step is measuring thickness and spacer correctly, and understanding safety glass rules near doors, baths, and low-level glazing. Many suppliers will not take responsibility for measurements made by homeowners. If in doubt, pay a glazier to measure and supply, even if you fit them yourself.

Cases from the field

Two examples capture the trade-offs:

- A 12-year-old uPVC bay facing west. Four of the six facets were misted, one badly etched. The frames were sound, beads snug, but weep holes clogged with silt. The owner wanted the view back and better winter comfort. We replaced all four sealed units with low-e, argon-filled units and warm edge spacers. Cost per facet was mid-range. The room warmed up noticeably, and the client remarked the evening chill vanished. We cleaned and enlarged the weeps, added fresh packers, and the windows looked and felt new.
- A rental flat with a single misted bedroom window. The tenancy turnover was in a week. Lead times for tempered glass were ten days due to factory backlog. The landlord wanted it presentable fast. We defogged the existing unit, cleared the frame drainage, and replaced a flattened wedge gasket to reduce drafts. The window cleared in two days. We scheduled a unit replacement for the next void period, with the landlord understanding defogging as temporary. That pragmatic staged approach pleased everyone.

What to ask your glazier

If you invite someone to quote, a few focused questions help you judge competence and fit:

- Will you check and clear frame drainage and confirm packer placement when replacing the unit?
- What spacer width and warm edge options do you recommend for my frames, and why?
- If defogging, what guarantee do you offer on clarity, and how do you handle etched glass?
- Can you match the existing low-e coating and tint, so the repaired pane does not look different from its neighbors?
- Do you carry public liability insurance, and what is the warranty on the sealed unit and your workmanship?

Good tradespeople answer these without bluster. If someone pushes only one solution without inspecting the frames, get a second opinion.

Bottom line

Yes, you can fix blown double glazing without replacing the unit, but with caveats. Defogging can restore appearance quickly and cheaply, useful as a stopgap or for hard-to-source shapes. It will not bring back full

thermal performance or cure glass etching. Replacing the sealed unit keeps your frames and solves the underlying fault, and in most homes it is the best balance of cost and durability. Full window replacement earns its keep when frames are tired or when you are ready to invest in a marked step up in comfort and efficiency.

Treat the decision as you would a car repair. Sometimes a patch gets you through the season. Sometimes a proper part replacement stops the same issue returning. With a clear-eyed view of the trade-offs and a trustworthy glazier, Double Glazing Repairs become a straightforward exercise that restores both your view and your warmth.