

The first time you notice mist building between the panes, it feels minor, almost cosmetic. You wipe the inside, then the outside, and nothing changes. A week later, the fog is thicker on cold mornings, and the room feels cooler. That is the quiet start of blown double glazing, and the costs creep in from there. I have seen homeowners spend more over two winters from the knock-on effects than they would have paid to fix the pane early. The direct price of a unit is only part of the story. The real bill includes energy, damp, wasted decorating, and the disruption that comes with any fix.

What follows is a practical walk through those hidden costs, the choices you have, and how to weigh repair against replacement without sinking money into the wrong solution. I will use the terms you will hear from fitters and surveyors: blown unit, failed seal, misted glass. They all describe the same issue - the seal around the perimeter has failed and moisture has entered the space between panes.

What “blown” really means, and why it happens

A modern double glazed unit is a sealed sandwich. Two panes of glass are separated by a spacer bar, the cavity is filled with dry air or argon, and a perimeter seal keeps out moisture. When that seal cracks, pulls back, or degrades, moist air gets in. The desiccant inside the spacer bar absorbs moisture for a while, but once saturated, condensation appears as fog or droplets between the panes.

Seal failure is not always dramatic. I have pulled units where one corner looked clear but the opposite corner had lines of mineral deposits, like faint limescale streaks. Heat and cold cycles pump air in and out through microscopic gaps. Poor drainage in the frame, blocked weep holes, or harsh cleaning chemicals can accelerate failure. So can age. Most standard units last 10 to 20 years depending on exposure, manufacturing quality, and how the frames shed water.

There is an early stage when the unit looks blown during sharp temperature swings but clears most days. That is your warning. The desiccant is nearly spent. After that, performance drops in two ways that you feel but do not always see: insulation worsens, and the cavity gas, if it was argon, is gone or diluted.

The quiet cost of lost insulation

When the seal fails, the U-value of the unit often drifts from the advertised performance. A healthy modern double glazed unit might have a center-of-glass U-value around 1.1 to 1.4 W/m²K when combined with low-e coatings and argon. A failed unit can behave closer to an old air-filled unit, sometimes around 2.7 W/m²K or worse, depending on the gap and surface coatings. You will not measure that with a handheld device at home, but you will feel it: rooms cool faster, radiators run longer, and you edge the thermostat up half a notch.

People ask me how much that costs. Real bills vary, but I can give a frame. Imagine a typical semi with roughly 18 to 24 m² of glazing. If two or three big units blow, that might affect 4 to 6 m². Depending on your climate and energy prices, the penalty for those failed units could add 30 to 80 pounds a year in extra heating per unit, sometimes more in exposed locations. For households using electric heating or those on tight tariffs, the penalty can exceed 100 pounds a year per badly failed unit. Over three winters, that extra consumption often outstrips the price of a straightforward replacement pane.

There is also comfort to consider. I see folks put off fixing one big living room window and end up running a fan heater on cold nights, which wipes out any savings from delaying Double Glazing Repairs.

Moisture, mould, and redecorating twice

A misted pane traps moisture inside the cavity, but it also signals a wider moisture balance in the frame. If the frame's drainage paths are blocked, water can linger. Timber beads and sills can swell, then crack paint and invite rot. On uPVC frames, you can still have blown seals, and excess moisture can find its way into screw holes and corners, seeping into wall reveals. None of this is dramatic on day one. It shows up as peeling paint near the corners, a black line of mould on the cool plaster edge, or soft timber beading when you press a fingernail into it.

I have had two callouts where the customer spotted mould on the bedroom reveal, cleaned it, repainted, and ignored the blown pane. Six months later the stain came back, and they paid again to prep and repaint. Labour for a small redecoration can easily run 150 to 300 pounds per room, materials extra if you use stain-blocking primers and mould-resistant paints. For timber frames, patching soft sections and re-priming can add another 100 to 200 pounds. That is the cost of redecorating twice because the underlying moisture driver was not addressed.

There is a health dimension as well. Bedrooms and box rooms with poor ventilation suffer the most. Mould is a real irritant for asthmatics and children. While the blown pane is not the only cause of condensation in a home, it often contributes to keeping that reveal cold, which encourages damp from internal humidity to settle and grow mould. Better glazing helps raise surface temperatures, and that reduces risk.

Damaged furnishings and the surprise from UV

People think of glazing as insulation, but it also filters UV. Low-e coatings and laminated glass can reduce UV fading on furniture, carpets, and artwork. Once the seal fails and the coating degrades or the unit fogs, you often change how you manage light. Curtains stay open longer to fight the gloom, blinds go up during weak winter sun, and sunlight falls directly on fabrics. I have seen south-facing rooms with a blown picture window where a rug faded by a noticeable shade in under a year. Replacing even a mid-range 2 by 3 metre rug runs a few hundred pounds. Add in the price of reupholstery or a new sofa and you are looking at a bigger bill than a replacement glazed unit.

There is a counterpoint: many modern low-e coatings are on the inside pane, and the UV filtering does not vanish the moment the cavity loses gas. Still, the practical effect of a dull, misted window is that people chase brighter rooms by exposing more to sun, and that changes wear on fabrics. It is a subtle cost that does not show on an invoice.

Security and insurance quirks

A blown unit can be weaker at the edges where the seal fails, particularly if the spacer has corroded or the glass has movement in the frame. It is not as if a burglar can spot a failed seal from the kerb and decide to target your house, but I have seen units where beading and gaskets had been disturbed and never reseated well after a DIY attempt. That does create an easier-to-pry edge.

Insurance is the quiet piece. Some policies exclude "gradual deterioration," a bucket that includes failed seals. If moisture from a blown pane causes plaster damage, you may find that claim declined unless there was a single, sudden event. Warranties from installers have timelines: a 10-year guarantee is common for the unit, but moving parts and labour are often shorter, and many require you to maintain frames and weep holes. If you cannot show basic maintenance, claims may falter. Keep receipts or a simple log of maintenance, and if you notice misting within the guarantee period, raise it promptly. Waiting a year can turn a covered replacement into an excluded claim.

“Can you fix blown double glazing” without replacing the whole window?

This is where the term Double Glazing Repairs becomes slippery. You have three broad options:

- Reseal and refurbish the existing unit in place. Some firms drill tiny holes, clear moisture, add desiccant or a vent, and reseal the perimeter. Costs range from modest to comparable with a new unit, depending on size and access. This can clear the view and buy time, but in my experience, the insulation benefit is not restored to original levels. The gas fill is not recreated, and long-term durability varies.
- Replace the sealed glass unit, keep the existing frame. For uPVC and many aluminium windows, this is the standard fix. A glazier measures the sight lines and cavity, orders a new IGU (insulated glass unit), often with low-e and argon, then swaps it in. For common sizes, you might pay 120 to 300 pounds per unit for smaller panes, rising to 400 to 700 for large or shaped units. Labour typically runs 60 to 150 pounds per visit, sometimes more if scaffolding or delicate access is needed.
- Replace the whole window, frame and all. This is the expensive route but makes sense when frames are warped, drainage is poor, or you want to upgrade to higher performance glazing, such as triple glazing or acoustic laminated units. Expect four figures per opening for quality products, especially on larger openings and when matching heritage styles.

If you ask, Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing without replacement, technicians will be honest if they are reputable. Clearing and resealing is a stopgap. Replacing the sealed unit is the solid middle path for most households. Full frame replacement is an upgrade or a remedy for degraded frames.



The hidden extras during glass replacement

People often budget for the glass and forget what surrounds it. Scaling a simple job into a whole morning can add costs that do not appear on the first quote.

Site access matters. A big pane on a first-floor bay over a sloped garden sometimes needs a tower or scaffold. Even a small mobile tower adds delivery and setup charges. If the pane is over a conservatory, you may need specialist ladders or to remove roof panels, which adds time and risk. On city terraces with parking restrictions, installers can spend 30 minutes just moving the van, which shows up as labour.

Finishes are another item. Beads and gaskets harden with age. Pull them once, and they crack or warp. Replacing beads to match a discontinued profile can be a headache. I have seen installers trek to three suppliers to achieve a near match. New gaskets are cheap material-wise but add time. If the unit sits behind internal trim, you may need a decorator to caulk and paint after. Small money individually, but it stacks up.

Finally, delivery times. A standard toughened unit can take a week or two from order to arrival, longer if you need obscure glass patterns, special coatings, or laminated security glass. If the pane has to be toughened, it must be made to size before tempering. Get the measurement wrong, and you pay twice. That is why surveys matter and why reputable companies measure twice with packers in place.

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When a low-cost fix becomes expensive later

The cheapest path on day one is not always the least costly over three years. I once visited a rental where the landlord had a service drill and vent two fogged units in a kitchen. The view cleared, and the tenant was happy. The winter after, the kitchen felt colder, and condensation increased on the inside surface of the inner pane. The hood was weak, cooking added moisture, and the cooler glass encouraged condensation to settle. The landlord paid for mould cleaning and repainting twice. When we finally replaced the sealed units with low-e argon glass and adjusted trickle vents, the problem reduced sharply. The total spend across two winters exceeded a straight unit replacement by a healthy margin.



This is the wager when you choose misted double glazing repairs that promise a cleared view for less. For a bathroom or utility where you do not care about perfect thermal performance, that stopgap can be fine. For living rooms or bedrooms, I recommend swapping the sealed unit.

Energy upgrades hidden in a replacement

If your double glazing is more than 15 years old, a failed unit can be an opportunity. Today's soft-coat low-e layers, warm-edge spacers, and argon fills bring tangible benefits. I have had customers who replaced only their worst three units, then called back a year later to finish the rest after noticing warmer rooms and smaller bills. Even in mild climates, improved comfort, reduced cold spots, and less condensation on winter mornings are noticeable.

For south or street-facing rooms, consider acoustic laminated glass. It costs more but cuts traffic noise. For sun-exposed rooms, use a low solar gain glass to reduce summer overheating. Both are easier to justify when you are already paying for a replacement. The incremental cost above a standard IGU might be 20 to 40 percent, but it addresses more than clarity.

Timber frames, heritage constraints, and the cost of doing it right

Timber adds complexity. Removing beads without damage needs a steadier hand, and replacing them with matching profiles is not a quick click-in job. If you have listed building constraints or conservation area rules, you may be restricted in the glass types allowed. Slimline double glazing for heritage sashes exists, with narrow cavities and putty lines that mimic single glazing. It performs better than single panes but does not match full-thickness units. Costs are higher, and lead times are longer.

In older timber sashes, a failed unit may sit in a sash that also needs cord or balance repairs, draught-proofing, and paint. Doing the glass alone can feel cheaper, yet the window remains the weak point for drafts and rattles. Bundling the work in one visit saves on future scaffold and labour. That is not always practical, but it is worth pricing both ways.

DIY fixes: where the line sits

Homeowners often ask if they can handle misted double glazing repairs themselves. If you are replacing just the sealed unit in a uPVC frame with internal beading, the job is mechanically simple: pop the beads, deglaze, swap packers, insert new unit, re-bead, and seal. The risks are in the details. Toughened glass has to be right on size. Pack the bottom rail properly to avoid the unit sitting in water. Set the toe and heel packers on doors and large sashes to prevent drop. Handle the low-e side carefully to avoid scratching the coating. And do not forget safety: toughened units are heavy and sharp at the edges.

I have seen competent DIYers succeed, but I have also returned to remedy creaking frames, dropped sashes, and bead gaps that whistle in wind. If you are not sure, hire a glazier for the first one and watch. Ask questions. You will either gain the confidence to do the next, or you will decide the labour cost is worth it.

When replacement is not optional

There are cases where you should not attempt patch repairs:

- Safety glass that is chipped at the edge near a door or low-level pane. That chip can nucleate a break.
- Units with internal water marks or mineral trails that will not clear with any venting technique.
- Frames with failed drainage where water sits on the bottom rail. The unit will fail again unless the frame is corrected.
- Oversized panes with noticeable bowing. That is a sign of pressure differences or poor original packing and can crack under small stress.

These are not rare. If you sense these issues, ask for a proper survey before committing to any quick fix.

Budgeting with a margin for the unexpected

Quotes often list the glass unit and installation, then add “extras if required.” That covers beads, gaskets, trims, and remedial frame work. A sensible contingency is 10 to 20 percent of the glass cost for minor surprises. For high or awkward installations, set a separate allowance for access equipment. If you will redecorate, factor in paint, primer, and a day of labour if you are not doing it yourself.

Compare like with like. One quote may include warm-edge spacers and argon, the next a basic air-filled unit. Ask about U-values, coating type, gas fill, and spacer. For doors or large sliders, specify toughening or lamination requirements. Keep notes. A simple table for your own use with supplier, spec, and price helps you avoid apples-to-oranges mistakes.

How to stop it happening again

You cannot make a sealed unit immortal, but you can extend its life. Keep weep holes clear. Every six months, run a cotton bud or small brush through them. If you jet wash frames, keep the nozzle back and aim away from seals. Avoid aggressive solvent cleaners on silicone and gaskets. If you see standing water in a frame after rain, call a fitter to check the drainage path and packers. On timber, maintain paint and sealant lines. Small cracks invite water into the rebate, where it sits against the unit’s edge and eats at the seal.

Ventilation helps. Trickle vents or regular airing reduces internal humidity, which lowers the dew point and diminishes condensation risks on cold glass. It will not repair a blown unit, but it keeps the rest of your glazing healthier and your decor drier.

A practical decision path

When you first spot mist:



- Note which pane and which rooms, and take photos over a week. If the fog is persistent, the unit is past its desiccant’s last stand.
- Check the frame for blocked weep holes or standing water. Clear them. If water pours out, you found a bigger part of the story.
- Get two quotes for a replacement sealed unit with low-e and argon, warm-edge spacer where possible. Ask the glazier to confirm glass type, size, and beading style.

- If budgets are tight, start with the worst-performing rooms. Replace the living room or bedroom windows first, then move to bathrooms and lesser-used spaces.
- If someone offers a very cheap drill-and-vent solution, weigh the room's importance. Utility room, maybe. Lounge or nursery, probably not.

Those steps are not glamorous, but they focus you on what matters: performance, longevity, and real costs over two or three heating seasons.

A note on landlords and tenants

In rentals, blown glazing is a flashpoint. Tenants report misting, landlords weigh costs. From a property maintenance perspective, deal with the worst units promptly. Drafts and cold rooms trigger higher energy use, tenant complaints, and damp issues. A string of small mildew [Double Glazing Repairs](#) cleanups and repaints soon exceeds a glass replacement. Keep records for deposit disputes, and specify in your tenancy that tenants report moisture issues early. If your insurance covers accidental damage but excludes gradual deterioration, glazing sits in a grey area. Planning prevents claims pain later.

The bottom line

A blown unit is not just about an ugly view. The hidden costs show up as higher heating, damage to frames and decor, reduced comfort, and the time you spend managing a colder room. Shortcuts exist, and in some rooms they make sense, but they rarely restore thermal performance. Misted Double Glazing Repairs that promise a quick clear can be a bridge, not a destination.

If you can, replace the sealed unit with a modern low-e, argon-filled IGU, and check the frame's drainage while you are there. Capture the advantage by choosing the right glass for the room. The upfront spend buys back comfort and cuts the quiet trickle of costs that otherwise carry on each season. Over the lifespan of a proper unit, that is the value that never appears on the invoice but you feel every day, especially when the frost hits and the room stays warm without the thermostat creeping up.