A misted skylight is a mood killer. Morning light that should arrive crisp and bright instead filters through a cloudy haze, and the whole room feels damp around the edges. For roof windows and skylights, the problem is almost always the same: the double glazing has blown, the seal has failed, and moisture has crept inside the unit. People ask whether Double Glazing Repairs are even worth it up high, or if they must swallow the cost of a full window replacement. The honest answer sits between those extremes, and it depends as much on access and frame condition as it does on the glass itself.

I have repaired and replaced glazing in roof windows in everything from Victorian terraces to new builds with shallow pitched roofs. The variables are many, but the principles hold steady. Let’s unpack what “blown” means, when you can save the unit, when you should not, and how to judge quotes and workmanship so you don’t fix the same problem again next winter.

What “blown” double glazing really means

A standard double glazed unit is two panes separated by a spacer bar that forms a sealed cavity. The cavity is filled with dry air or an inert gas. The spacer usually holds a desiccant that mops up trace moisture. The whole glass sandwich is sealed around the perimeter. When that perimeter seal fails, outside air carrying moisture infiltrates the cavity. The desiccant has limited capacity; once saturated, it stops helping. The result is condensation between the panes, which you cannot wipe away from either side because it lives inside the unit.

With roof windows and skylights, the issue is more visible and more frequent. The glazed area sits at an angle and takes more UV, more heat variation, and more driving rain. Thermal cycling and UV exposure hammer perimeter seals. On older units the spacer is often metallic and conductive, which worsens temperature swings at the edge and stresses the seal further.

Signs tend to follow a familiar pattern. First, a faint crescent of mist around the edge on cold mornings. Next, transient fog across the pane during warm days that cool quickly at night. Eventually you find water droplets or a mineral haze baked into the inner faces of glass, along with draughts or a sense of chill as the insulating performance degrades. You might see black flecks near the spacer that look like pepper. That is often degraded desiccant.

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

For most skylights and roof windows, you do not need to replace the entire window frame just because the glass has blown. In many cases you can replace the insulated glass unit, known as the IGU, and keep the existing frame and flashing. This applies to many branded roof windows like Velux, Fakro, and Keylite as well as site-built skylights in timber or aluminium frames.

There are exceptions. If the sash is warped, the timber has rot, or the aluminium frame shows galvanic corrosion at fixings, simply swapping glass won't serve you. I have removed rooflights where water entry past the glazing bars had turned the timber sash into sponge cake. The glass was fine; the frame was the failure. More often, though, the seal in the glass unit fails while the frame remains sound, in which case a glass-only replacement is a savvy choice.

The popular "repair" of de-fogging a misted unit

Some firms offer Misted Double Glazing Repairs that involve drilling tiny holes into the glass, venting the cavity, injecting a drying agent, and plugging the holes. On vertical windows at ground level, this approach can buy time on rental properties where budgets run tight. On skylights, it rarely pays. High solar load and water exposure on a sloped surface accelerate re-misting, and the visual result often has streaks or residues. More important, the thermal performance stays compromised because the gas fill is gone. A drilled and vented unit can look clearer for a season, maybe two, but it is not a long-term fix on a roof window that faces daily temperature swings and UV load. If you take roof insulation seriously, it is almost always better value to replace the IGU.

Gas fill, coatings, and why roof windows suffer more

Modern IGUs often use argon or krypton to reduce convective heat loss. They also carry low-E coatings that reflect infrared and control solar gain. Roof windows see more direct solar exposure, so a good low-E with the right solar heat gain coefficient can keep summer lofts bearable. When a unit blows and loses its gas fill, U-values decline, the glass edge becomes cooler in winter, and condensation risk around the internal frame increases. That is why people with misted roof glazing often notice cold draughts and damp plasterboard even if the leak is not from the flashing.

Because a roof window is tilted, water sits longer along the bottom seal and debris collects. Bird droppings, leaf acids, and UV combine to degrade the seal faster than on vertical glazing. In some climates you also get freeze-thaw cycles. The sealant moves, cracks, and eventually fails. It is not your imagination, roof windows blow earlier than similar-age vertical double glazing.

Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing yourself on a roof window?

If the unit is small and accessible from an internal roof ladder or a balcony, a competent DIYer can sometimes remove the sash, unclip or unscrew the glazing beads, and swap the IGU. I have seen tidy work from homeowners on first-floor roof windows with proper fall-arrest protection. The gotchas are simple but consequential: mis-measure the IGU by 2 mm and you'll fight the beads, reuse a flattened gasket and you'll invite leaks, overtighten screws and you'll stress the pane at the corner.

The bigger issue is access. Most skylights sit above stairwells, high ceilings, or over tiled roofs that need roof-side access. Safe temporary edge protection, fall restraint, and roof ladders aren't optional. If the glazing is laminated

inner or toughened outer, the weight can surprise you. A mid-size laminated argon-filled unit commonly weighs 12 to 20 kg. Handling that at height while aligning gaskets is where jobs go wrong.

As a rule of thumb, DIY is reasonable if you can safely remove the sash to a workbench, you have the exact IGU specification in hand, and the sash is in good health. Anything that requires external flashing disturbance, or where the sash frame looks even slightly distorted, belongs to a professional installer.

How to tell when the frame needs more than glass

I look for clues before quoting a glass-only swap. Timber frames with dark staining at corners suggest longstanding moisture. Press a thumbnail into the inner sash near the lower corners. If it dents easily, the timber is compromised and will continue to move. On aluminium, check for white powdery oxidation and pitting near screws, and for split thermal breaks on older units. If the sash won't shut smoothly or the locking handle needs force, the geometry may be off, which will prevent an even seal on the new unit. In those cases, the right answer is often a full sash replacement kit, or if the brand is obsolete, a whole new roof window with fresh flashing.

Brand-specific realities

Velux and similar brands design their sashes so the glazing can be replaced without disturbing the external flashing kits. You pivot the sash, remove hinge pins or a retaining clip, lift the sash out, then bench-replace the glazing. This keeps the roof watertight during the swap. Lead times for made-to-size IGUs vary by region, commonly 1 to 3 weeks. For Fakro and Keylite the workflow is similar but bead systems differ. Always verify the glazing thickness stack, spacer color, and coating specification from the product code etched on the glass edge or from the manufacturer database.

Site-built skylights in timber may use standard-sized IGUs, which can be replicated by any competent glass shop. Measure tight and specify toughened outer, laminated inner for roof safety in case of impact. In many jurisdictions that safety spec is required on any overhead glazing. If you have an older acrylic dome rather than glass, "blown" often refers to crazing and leaks at fixings, not a failed IGU. Acrylic domes can be replaced like for like, or upgraded to double or triple skin units that improve insulation.

Cost ranges that make sense

Prices move with size, access, and spec. For a straightforward roof window where you can lift the sash out internally and the frame is sound, a replacement double glazed unit typically runs in the low hundreds for parts. Expect a total of 250 to 600 in many UK regions for supply and fit of a mid-size argon low-E unit, more if laminated inner glass is specified. Larger skylights or units that require external access, tower scaffold, or roof work can climb to 800 to 1,500 once you carry the labor and safety setup. Full window replacements with new flashing kits land higher again because you are opening the roof.

Consider operational cost. A poor IGU that has lost gas may add 50 to 100 per year in heating losses on a loft room in a temperate climate. That varies, but it illustrates why people feel a difference after a proper replacement, not just see it.

Repair workflow that avoids future headaches

A clean repair is predictable. First, confirm the leak source and frame condition. Fog inside the IGU points to a blown unit, but water staining on plasterboard can come from failed flashing or a split underfelt. Run a hose test around the roof window perimeter if the client reports active leaks. Once you have ruled out flashing failure, measure the IGU precisely. Most roof windows have a glazing pocket designed to take a set thickness. Adding 2 mm of laminated inner glass without adjusting beads can create pressure points.

On install day, protect the room with dust sheets and set up stable working platforms. Remove the sash carefully. On the bench, note the order of gaskets and packers. Clean the glazing pocket thoroughly. Any debris trapped there shortcuts the new seal. Fit the IGU square and true, with packers placed to transfer weight to the hinge side per manufacturer guidance, not the lower edge. Replace compressible gaskets that look shiny or permanently flattened. Reseat beads evenly without forcing corners; use a bead roller if needed to avoid chipping the edge. With the sash rehung, check operation and perimeter seal compression. Internally, run a smoke pencil or simply feel for draughts on a windy day after installation.

Upgrades worth considering during replacement

A blown unit offers a chance to improve performance. For south or west facing roof lights that overheat, a low-E coating with moderate solar control can tame summer peaks without making the room gloomy. If street noise carries into the loft, specify a thicker laminate for the inner pane to improve acoustic damping. For coastal or high-UV settings, warm-edge spacers reduce edge losses and resist seal degradation better than old aluminum spacers. You can also step from argon to krypton on deep frames, though the cost jump is usually hard to justify unless you are chasing passive-house targets.

Trickle vents divide opinion. On roof windows, a well-specified vent can reduce winter condensation at reveals, but it also compromises airtightness. If the building already has balanced ventilation, keep the window airtight and avoid vents. If it does not, the vent can help keep the space drier, which protects the frame over time.

When a full replacement is smarter

There is a tipping point where Double Glazing Repairs become false economy. If the skylight is over 20 years old, the frame gaskets are brittle, and the flashing kit belongs to a discontinued range, a glass-only fix might prolong a

system that is ready to fail elsewhere. If the sash is racked and you see daylight at one corner, the fresh IGU will be stressed, and the seal will fail early. If black mould persists around the frame despite ventilation and you can push a screwdriver into the timber, the wise move is a new unit with proper flashing and insulation collars to stop thermal bridging.

Another red flag is condensation not just inside the IGU, but on the room-side pane even in mild weather. That can mean poor ventilation in the room and a cold frame. Upgrading the entire roof window to a better insulated unit with warm-edge spacers, deeper frame, and better internal linings may solve both comfort and durability.

Safety and access are half the job

It is easy to fixate on the glass and overlook how you will reach it. Roofing work kills and injures more homeowners than almost any other trade task. Even small projects deserve respect. On two-storey homes with pitched roofs, a responsible contractor will use roof ladders, harnesses or temporary guard rails, and sometimes a tower scaffold for stable platform work. That equipment costs money and time, but it prevents hospital visits. If a quote seems suspiciously cheap for an external-access job, ask how the team will work at height. If they propose leaning a ladder against gutters and manhandling glass one-handed, look elsewhere.

For internal access, do not trust a decorative plasterboard opening to hold your weight. Use a proper work platform that spans joists, not chairs stacked on a stair landing. Wear gloves with grip; toughened glass shards are razor sharp if a corner chips.

Mistakes I see in the field

The most common failure after a “repair” is a new IGU pressed hard into a distorted sash without packers. Over time the glass edge chips or the seal gets pinched and fails. Second is bead damage. Plastic beads get brittle with UV. Force them and they crack, then they no longer hold tension, inviting rattles and water paths. Third is neglecting to replace old gaskets. People reuse them to save a small amount, but flat gaskets no longer compress evenly, so water tracks past them along the bead line.

One more: assuming a damp patch near a roof window always means blown glazing. I have traced several ceiling stains to leaking flashing or a torn underfelt collar that allowed wind-driven rain into the Cat Flap Installation roof build-up. Replace the glass in that scenario and you still have a drip the next storm.

Practical guidance for homeowners comparing options

If you are gathering quotes, ask each firm to state whether they are offering a glass-only IGU replacement or a full sash or window replacement. Request the IGU specification in writing: dimensions, spacer type and color, gas fill, coatings, and safety glass details. Ask how they will access the window and what protection they will use for the room interior. If your skylight is a known brand, provide the product code so they can order the correct glazing set.

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If a company proposes drilling and venting to clear the mist, press them on expected lifespan and thermal performance. In most roof window scenarios, that service is a stopgap. It might be attractive in a rental with a short horizon, but it does not restore the insulating value you pay for with double glazing.

Finally, check lead times. A typical pattern is ordering the IGU, waiting one to three weeks for fabrication, then a single visit of one to two hours to swap the unit on an accessible sash. If scaffolding is involved, schedule may stretch. Good firms will board over the opening if a sash has to be removed for longer than a day, though with branded roof windows that is rarely necessary.

Prevention and longer life from the next unit

You can stretch the life of your new glazing. Keep the external pane clean, especially the lower seal line, so grit and acids do not sit against the edge. Trim nearby tree branches that drop sap and shade the window, because shade keeps seals wet longer after rain. Ensure the room has adequate ventilation; dry rooms reduce interior condensation at the frame, which lowers freeze-thaw stress. If you are repainting reveals, use moisture-resistant finishes around the window to prevent mould and paint failure that trap damp against timber.

Installers can help too by choosing warm-edge spacers, using the right packers, and verifying sash geometry before fitting. Small choices add years. I once revisited a loft conversion ten years after replacing two IGUs. The south-facing unit was still crisp, the north-facing one had a faint edge haze. The only difference, apart from orientation, was a small gutter of dirt at the lower edge where moss from the roof washed against the glass. After we cleaned and applied a simple drip trim, the haze stopped progressing.

Where Double Glazing Repairs fit in the bigger picture

A roof window is a weak point in the thermal envelope by definition, but a good one brings light and air that transform a space. Treat repairs as part of the building fabric, not an isolated fix. If you have multiple misted windows across the house of similar age, plan replacements in batches to save on access costs. If loft rooms regularly push past 28 degrees in summer, pair new glazing with external blinds or solar-control coatings. If winter condensation returns, invest in ventilation or low-level heat to keep surfaces above dew point rather than blaming the new glass.

You can absolutely fix blown double glazing in skylights and roof windows. Most of the time, the smart route is to replace the IGU with a like-for-like or upgraded spec and keep the frame. Skip drill-and-vent schemes unless you understand their limits. Watch for signs that the frame is failing, and when in doubt, choose a full replacement that addresses structure, flashing, and insulation in one go. Done properly, a new sealed unit should run clear for 10 to 20 years, sometimes longer if the environment is kind.

A short checklist before you commit

- Identify the culprit: mist inside the panes points to a blown IGU, stains around the opening may indicate flashing or underfelt issues.
- Confirm frame health: check timber hardness, gasket condition, sash alignment, and external beading.
- Specify the new unit: get dimensions, safety glass type, low-E coating, gas fill, and spacer details in writing.
- Decide access and safety: internal sash removal or external roof access; make sure the plan is safe and realistic.
- Choose the right fix: prefer IGU replacement over de-fogging for roof windows, and step up to full window replacement if the frame or flashing is compromised.

People often search “Can you Fix Blown Double Glazing” expecting a simple yes or no. The reality lives in the details: what failed, where it sits on the roof, and how you will reach it. Make those calls with care, and your skylight will go back to doing its quiet job, filling the room with clean light and keeping the weather precisely where it belongs.