FACTSHEET

A guide to secondary glazing

A practical, lower-cost way to make your home warmer, quieter and more energy efficient

Improving windows and doors can reduce draughts and heat loss, lower energy use and make your home more comfortable. If full window replacement is not affordable, practical or permitted, secondary glazing may be a suitable alternative.

It can be particularly useful in rented homes, listed buildings, conservation areas and properties where original windows need to be retained. Always obtain any necessary permission before making changes.

Why improve your windows?

- **A warmer, more comfortable home:** an extra layer helps reduce heat loss, draughts and cold spots.
- **Potential savings:** using less energy to heat your home may reduce bills.
- **Less outside noise:** a well-fitted secondary layer can improve sound insulation.
- **Reduced internal condensation:** warmer inner surfaces may help, although ventilation and moisture control are still essential.
- **Lower environmental impact:** reducing energy demand can help cut household carbon emissions.

What is secondary glazing?

Secondary glazing adds a separate pane of glass or clear plastic to the inside of an existing window. The gap between the original window and the new layer acts as insulation. Performance depends on the material, the size of the gap and how well the edges are sealed.

Before you begin: check your tenancy agreement and ask your landlord if you rent. Owners of listed buildings or homes in conservation areas should seek advice from the local planning authority. Do not block trickle vents or other ventilation openings.

Choosing the right option

1. Heat-shrink glazing film

This is usually the simplest and least expensive option. Thin transparent film is fixed to the window frame with double-sided tape, then tightened carefully with warm air from a hairdryer.

- **Best for:** a quick, temporary winter improvement.
- **Advantages:** low cost, widely available and suitable for confident DIY fitting.
- **Limitations:** normally needs replacing each year; removal may lift weak paint or leave adhesive marks.
- **Indicative cost:** roughly £10–£15 for enough film to cover a large bay window. Prices vary, so check current local prices.

2. Removable rigid panels

A clear acrylic or polycarbonate sheet is attached inside the frame using magnetic strips, Velcro fasteners or clip-in edging. The panel can be removed when warmer weather returns or when access to the original window is needed.

- **Best for:** households wanting a reusable seasonal solution.
- Advantages: more durable than film and often better at reducing draughts and noise.
- **Limitations:** careful measuring and a good edge seal are essential; larger panels can be awkward to handle and store.
- **Indicative cost:** a 3 mm acrylic sheet measuring about 150 × 100 cm may cost from around £45, excluding fixings and cutting. Check current prices before buying.

3. Semi-permanent or professionally fitted systems

These systems usually use glass or robust clear panels in aluminium or uPVC frames. Units may be fixed, lift-out, hinged or mounted on horizontal or vertical sliding tracks, allowing the original window to remain usable.

- **Best for:** a long-term improvement where full replacement glazing is unsuitable.
- **Advantages:** stronger thermal and noise performance, a neater finish and a choice of openable designs.
- **Limitations:** higher upfront cost; professional measuring and installation are normally recommended.
- **Indicative cost:** often from around £300 per window, depending on size, shape, material and opening method. Obtain more than one written quotation.

Before buying or fitting

- Measure every opening carefully; older windows may not be perfectly square.
- Repair obvious leaks, damaged putty or rotten timber before adding secondary glazing.
- Keep ventilation routes clear and continue to ventilate kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms.
- Make sure opening windows, emergency exits and fire-safety routes remain accessible.
- Choose a design that allows safe cleaning and access to handles and locks.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Use appropriate eye and hand protection when cutting rigid sheets or ask a supplier to cut them to size.
- Consider thermal curtains or blinds as an additional measure but keep them away from heaters and sources of flame and tucked behind radiators when closed.

Condensation: what to know

Secondary glazing may reduce condensation on the room-facing surface, but it does not remove moisture from the home. Use extractor fans where provided, open vents, avoid drying clothes on radiators and wipe away persistent moisture. If condensation appears between the original window and the secondary panel, check the seals and ventilation arrangements or seek advice.

Which option may suit you?

- **Lowest budget or short-term need:** consider heat-shrink film.
- **Reusable seasonal solution:** consider a removable rigid panel.
- **Long-term performance and a professional finish:** request quotations for a framed system.
- **Listed building, conservation area or rented home:** obtain permission or specialist advice before starting.

Need help?

Visit a Warmth Works drop-in advice and information session for practical guidance or look out for details of community events taking place across the town. Bring window measurements, photographs and any questions about your property so the team can give more useful advice.

Together, we can create warmer homes, stronger communities and a cleaner-energy Calder Valley.

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