Why is my trickle vent not working properly?

Your trickle vent may not work properly due to blockages, incorrect installation, or being closed off by occupants. Dust, debris, or paint can clog the vents, while improper positioning or sealing during installation can hinder airflow. Additionally, occupants often close trickle vents to avoid drafts, compromising ventilation effectiveness.

Why Your Trickle Vent May Be Failing

Trickle vents are a common feature in UK homes, designed to provide background ventilation and improve indoor air quality. However, they often fail to function as intended. Here's a detailed look at the reasons behind this issue and how to address it.

Common Causes of Trickle Vent Failure

1. **Blockages from Dust and Debris:** Trickle vents can accumulate dust, dirt, and even insect nests over time, obstructing airflow. Regular cleaning is essential to maintain their effectiveness.
2. **Paint or Sealant Build-Up:** During redecorating, paint or sealant can accidentally cover the vents, rendering them useless. Always check and clear vents after painting.
3. **Improper Installation:** If trickle vents are not installed correctly—such as being misaligned or poorly sealed—they may not function as intended. Ensure installation complies with manufacturer guidelines.
4. **Occupant Behaviour:** Many homeowners close trickle vents to avoid drafts or noise, especially during colder months. This defeats their purpose and can lead to poor indoor air quality.
5. **Inadequate Sizing:** Trickle vents must meet the minimum equivalent area requirements outlined in Approved Document F. Undersized vents cannot provide sufficient airflow.

The Impact of Faulty Trickle Vents

- **Poor Indoor Air Quality**: Without proper ventilation, pollutants like carbon dioxide, VOCs, and moisture accumulate, affecting health.
- **Condensation and Mould**: Inadequate airflow leads to condensation, which can cause mould growth and damage building materials.
- **Energy Inefficiency**: Closed or blocked vents can increase reliance on mechanical ventilation, raising energy costs.

How to Fix a Faulty Trickle Vent

1. **Inspect and Clean Regularly:** Remove any blockages and ensure the vent is free from obstructions.
2. **Check for Paint or Sealant:** If the vent is painted over, carefully scrape away the paint or replace the vent entirely.
3. **Verify Installation:** Ensure the vent is correctly positioned and sealed according to building regulations.
4. **Educate Occupants:** Encourage homeowners to keep trickle vents open to maintain airflow and indoor air quality.
5. **Upgrade to Mechanical Ventilation:** For homes with persistent issues, consider alternatives like decentralised mechanical extract ventilation (dMEV) or mechanical ventilation with heat

recovery (MVHR).

Ensure your trickle vents are clean, open, and correctly installed to maintain healthy indoor air quality—contact a ventilation specialist for tailored advice.