TOUCH STONE
LIFECARE

An Interoperable Platform for Advance Care Planning:

Impact and Insights from Touchstone Life Care's Pilot with Whiddon

Whiddon

for-purpose evaluations

Introduction

The landscape of aged care in Australia is undergoing significant transformation, with regulatory and legislated changes including the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards now emphasising person-centred care, dignity, and clinical safety as well as secure data sharing for connected care.

One critical aspect of this shift is advance care planning: "a process of planning for future health and personal care whereby the person's values, beliefs and preferences are made known to guide decision-making at a future time when that person cannot make or communicate their decisions."[1]

Until now, the widespread use of paper-based and siloed advance care plans (ACPs) in aged care meant these vital documents, if they existed, were frequently inaccessible when most needed, including by paramedics.[2,3] This lack of accessibility has been shown to contribute directly to increased stress and emotional burden for families, poorer alignment of care with patient wishes, and lower overall satisfaction and quality in end-of-life care.[4,5,6] And while ensuring ACPs are accessible at the point of care is a proven strategy to improve both family wellbeing and care outcomes,[7] aged care staff often lack confidence and knowledge in raising and facilitating these discussions.[8]

> "
>
> My mum nearly lost her life last year. Her aged care facility gave a copy of her Advance Care Directive to the ambulance staff but it got lost somewhere along the way. She'd put so much careful thought into that plan and it was heartbreaking to realise it was totally useless when it was most needed.
>
> **Jasmine Davar, Sydney**

> Dad had a paper advance care plan in place. But it turned out he'd ticked 'yes' he wanted CPR and 'yes' to Do Not Resuscitate so his doctors didn't know what to do when he went into cardiac arrest and neither did I. It was horrible.
>
> **Alex, aged 46, Perth**

Touchstone Life Care (Touchstone) offers a secure, cloud-based platform designed to address these challenges in advance care planning. Built to integrate seamlessly into the aged care and healthcare ecosystems, the platform and its embedded software enable advance care directives, advance care plans, goals of care and other documents to be shared and updated ahead of need, and readily accessible at the time of need, including during transitions of care and emergency responses.

ACDs - Create Once. Share Widely.

TOUCH STONE LIFECARE

Platform for Interoperability & Access

FHIR

Aged Care CMS

Ambulance eMR

Hospital eMR

My Health Record

Public Guardian

Hospital in the Home

GP, Allied Health & Specialist IT

Legal Desktop IT

Alarms & Wearables

WA - Advance Health Directive

NT - Advance Personal Plan

SA - Advance Care Directive

QLD - Advance Health Directive: Statement of Choices

NSW - Advance Care Directive/ACP

ACT - ACP/Statement of Choices Health Direction Form

VIC - Advance Care Directive/Adults & Advance Care Directive/Children

Appointment of Medical TDM

TAS - Advance Care Directive

A 2024-2025 pilot project with Whiddon, a not-for-profit aged care provider, evaluated independently by For-Purpose Evaluations, demonstrated this technology can improve access, communication, and compliance around advance care planning in residential aged care settings and potentially the broader aged care sector.

This whitepaper draws on data from the Impact Report by For-Purpose Evaluations to outline the benefits of an interoperable digital platform for managing ACPs for residents, aged care providers, and healthcare professionals; and to highlight the strategic implications for future rollouts throughout the aged care sector.

Touchstone Life Care's platform

Key features include:

- **Secure data sharing:** Touchstone includes Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) to ensure ACPs and Goals of Care documents are accessible across multiple health care settings for faster, coordinated care decisions and delivery.

- **MHR and integration capabilities:** Touchstone connects with My Health Record and with IT systems in aged care, hospice, community, and estate planning to streamline workflows.

- **Compliance with Aged Care Quality Standards:** Touchstone allows providers to readily audit and report their organisation's ACP processes including uptake, sharing, and accessibility, as required by the Aged Care Quality Standards.

- **QR code access:** Each end user is assigned a unique PIN coded QR code, providing instant access to the documents and plans for paramedics, emergency and health providers, and family members during critical moments, or when IT systems are down.

- **Secure sharing with trusted contacts:** Family members, GPs and other trusted contacts can see the plan on their own devices at any time, increasing the likelihood that a person's wishes will be understood and followed by those involved in decisions regarding end-of-life care.

- **Version control:** The platform prevents confusion by clearly tracking updates so only the latest version is visible, while allowing rollbacks or previous versions when required.

- **Cybersecurity:** Cloud-based security, consented and encrypted sharing, and security certifications provide additional safety and ensure organisations and their staff are meeting privacy and cybersecurity requirements.

- **Additional Personal Legacy Vault:** Users can also upload their choice of additional documents such as memories or non-medical wishes to a Personal Legacy Vault for secure, selected storing and sharing.

Piloting change

Pilot projects are critical for testing how innovative ideas and technologies perform in real-world settings. They provide a structured, low-risk environment to validate concepts, identify potential challenges, and refine operational processes before full-scale implementation.

In the context of aged and health care, pilots allow providers and organisations to assess the impact of new tools on their own patient care, staff workflows, and regulatory compliance. By capturing data on outcomes, user experiences, and process efficiencies, pilot projects offer a clearer understanding of whether a solution can deliver the expected benefits and address real-world needs.

For technology vendors like Touchstone Life Care, pilot projects provide an opportunity to address practical concerns including staff training, integrations, and patient engagement, while also highlighting the broader strategic value of the digital transformation.

The Whiddon pilot project

The pilot, supported by the JO & JR Wicking Trust, took place across three Whiddon residential aged care sites in regional NSW – Largs, Maclean, and Jessie Hunt (Narrabri) – between December 2024 and March 2025 with an independent evaluation of the pilot undertaken by For-Purpose Evaluations.[10*]

The TLC-Whiddon pilot not only confirmed the feasibility of an interoperable digital ACP platform and embedded software, but also revealed critical insights into integration needs, staff readiness, and the importance of sector-wide communication, setting a strong foundation for future expansion.

The project

- Aimed to assess the impact of an interoperable platform for managing ACPs on:
  - Resident care
  - Staff confidence
  - Operational efficiency
- Involved 137 residents and 178 on-site staff.


Key outcomes

80%
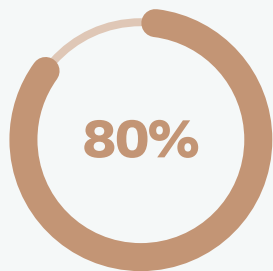
1. Resident access to ACPs

80% of residents had ACPs available digitally and via QR code, ensuring their preferences were readily accessible in emergencies and transitions of care.

"The availability to use QR codes for ambulance and hospital [is valuable]. We have a bi-monthly hospital meeting where we let them know... They thought this ease of access was good." – Whiddon staff.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Digitisation of ACPs provides instant access to a resident's most up-to-date documents. Now stored in a structured, secure database with interoperable accessibility, ACPs can be shared with health care professionals and linked with external systems like My Health Record and hospital EMRs.

69%
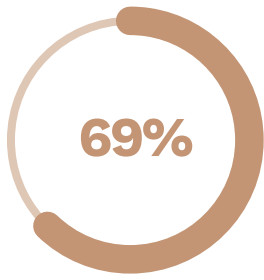
2. Family and provider engagement

69% of ACPs were shared with trusted contacts, all of whom accepted access, promoting clarity and reducing follow-up work.

"Having the ability to attach a contact person so it goes straight to them is one of the big bonuses [of Touchstone]... Getting forms back from family members is a time [consuming] thing for us to do. A good thing about Touchstone is sending a resident's document to a family member and saying, 'Are you happy with that?'" – Whiddon staff.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

The Touchstone platform's capability to digitally share ACPs with trusted contacts and support automated reporting supports compliance with the ACQS. This ease of sharing provides peace of mind for residents and their loved ones that their wishes have been documented, shared and understood.

95%

94%

3. Staff knowledge and confidence

95% of staff reported increased knowledge of advance care planning processes, while 94% felt more confident in discussing end-of-life preferences.

"Most of our care plans were already done, so we were just uploading what we had." – Whiddon staff.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Improved knowledge and confidence in completing ACPs with residents increases accuracy of ACP sharing and management. For residents, staff expertise in guiding these conversations can improve their overall experience when creating ACPs.

4. Improved compliance and audit readiness

The platform's version control and sharing logs support compliance with Aged Care Quality Standards and provide clear evidence for audits.

"It's also an easier thing to prove for compliance that trusted contacts have seen it." – Whiddon staff.

5. Staff willingness to adopt digital transformation for improved care

This project demonstrated Whiddon staff were willing to engage with a major transformation from a paper based siloed system to a digital interoperable system. They generously provided formal and informal feedback to improve both the implementation and the product, and ultimately resident care, without disrupting their care delivery.

"The additional questions are good. They are a nice way to approach someone's end-of-life directive. It's about choices and what is important to them." – Whiddon staff.

> We understood the reasons to use Touchstone to be better communication between us and hospitals and medical teams, better for the families to be able to see and update the live document; and to meet compliance around access and sharing [...] The intent and idea is great, it's just the way it is at the moment [not integrated into the everyday system] is clunky and time-consuming. **- Whiddon staff.**

Additional comments:

Quality control

"I think the next of kin having access is a great thing. Some have viewed it and pointed out problems [with the ACP] and we have changed it." – Whiddon staff.

Staff support

"[Touchstone] was really open and accepting of any questions, follow-up and looked into any issues. Having one contact and that personal relationship [was helpful]." – Whiddon staff.

Training and consolidation of learning

"I think the next of kin having access is a great thing. Some have viewed it and pointed out problems [with the ACP] and we have changed it." – Whiddon staff.

"At the beginning of the year there was a bunch of new programs happening at one time so a refresher course would be really helpful." – Whiddon staff.

Integrations and workflows

"[Unless it is integrated with our daily clinical management system] It's another app that we're using outside of our recommended recording system. Another app, another log-in and another platform for people to learn." – Whiddon staff.

"Logging in the system between administrator and resident profiles is a huge time factor." – Whiddon staff.

Challenges raised and lessons learned from the pilot

While the successful elements of a pilot are always encouraging, the challenges raised provide valuable insights for long-term success.

Implementing the Touchstone platform at Whiddon's residential aged care sites revealed critical lessons that will inform future rollouts and ongoing improvements to digital ACP systems. These insights underscore the importance of strategic planning, effective change management, and stakeholder engagement.

Integrations and workflows

One of the most significant learnings identified during the pilot is the need to integrate with the clinical management system (CMS) used by staff on a daily basis. Whiddon staff emphasised they would prefer integration of Touchstone within the clinical system they log into every day, because of the workflow efficiencies and time savings it would provide.

Education about data and security features

Education and training about the product was an integral part of the pilot but could have emphasised the security measures embedded in the product, so they were not seen as obstacles but rather improvements to resident care. Human factors are one of the most frequent causes of data breaches, and any cybersecurity measure or human firewall is only as good as the education around it.

Multimodal flexible ongoing training

The pilot demonstrated that both self-paced learning and live training are essential for successful technology adoption. While staff appreciated the flexibility of online modules, they also valued in-person sessions that allowed them to ask questions and see the system in action. The combination of using Whiddon's own Learning Management System, training embedded in the product, plus virtual and sometimes in-person training sessions worked well but could be further improved with regular ongoing webinars as refreshers and updates.

Communication flows support responsive troubleshooting

The communication model for the pilot was centralised through the Whiddon management team to ensure scalability for expansion to additional sites and to align with Whiddon's change management processes. However, this approach presented barriers for onsite staff to engage directly with Touchstone and for Touchstone to be responsive to the evolving needs of the sites.

External factors and competing priorities

Time constraints, competing priorities, and new legislation sometimes created delays and reduced frontline staff's sense of ownership over the rollout. The adoption of a combined approach during the pilot with both centralised communication from Whiddon and direct communication between the Touchstone and the pilot sites helped address issues that arose.

Broader sector communication

The pilot also revealed the importance of engaging the broader healthcare ecosystem, including paramedics, GPs, and hospital staff, to ensure they understand the purpose and functionality of interoperable advance care planning solutions.

"The feedback from the paramedics was, 'We don't know anything about this'." – Whiddon staff.

Developing clear, consistent communication strategies that extend beyond the immediate aged care setting will be critical for realising the full potential of an interoperable ACP platform.

Recommendations for aged care providers

The pilot has delivered valuable insights to assist other aged care providers in implementing Touchstone when making their ACPs shared, accessible, and easy to audit.

Start small

For large-scale providers considering Touchstone's digital ACP platform, starting with a smaller-scale pilot is a practical, manageable approach.

An initial pilot phase can help organisations to:

- Identify potential barriers
- Fine-tune processes
- Build internal support

Findings from the initial phase can inform the broader rollout. This approach proved effective for Whiddon, where the pilot revealed critical lessons around CMS integration, staff training, and frontline engagement that will inform future expansions.

Offer a mix of live and self-paced training options

Training is a critical component of any digital transformation in aged care. Given the diverse skill levels, digital literacies, and learning preferences within aged care teams, offering both live, interactive training sessions and flexible, self-paced modules can maximise staff uptake and confidence. Regular refresher sessions can also sustain momentum, address emerging questions, and reinforce best practices as the platform becomes Business-as-Usual.

Prioritise CMS integration

Integrating the Touchstone platform with existing Clinical Management Systems (CMS) ensures that ACPs are seamlessly included in resident records, provides rapid access in critical moments, reduces administrative burden and mitigates risk of duplication errors or missed information during critical moments.

Communication is key

Effective communication is essential for building trust and ensuring the successful adoption of digital ACPs. This includes clear, consistent messaging to internal teams, as well as proactive engagement with external stakeholders like families, GPs, paramedics, and hospital staff.

For internal teams, regular updates on platform benefits, data security as a core component of patient and resident care, training opportunities, and direct communication channels with technology vendors can reduce uncertainty and build staff confidence.

For external partners, targeted communication about the benefits of secure storage, instant sharing of their loved one's documents, and ensuring potential decision makers have access to the same single source of truth can strengthen collaboration and improve patient outcomes.

Strategic implications for the aged care sector

Touchstone Life Care's platform supports compliance with the updated Aged Care Quality Standards, aligning directly with national goals for person-centred, high-quality care.

Automated reports demonstrate dignity, choice, and clinical safety, as well as consistent accessibility, accuracy, and sharing of ACPs. This is critical as aged care providers face increasing scrutiny from regulators and must demonstrate their ability to uphold residents' rights and preferences at every stage of care.

Digital sharing logs and audit-ready document management enable providers to meet data and business security requirements and position themselves as leaders in the evolving aged care landscape.

Integrating Touchstone into aged care systems is a strategic risk management approach for providers. It allows them to switch clinical management systems without losing access to the ACP data, ensure ACPs are shared and accessible beyond any one siloed system, and mitigate the risk of duplication errors, missing data at critical moments, or not meeting their ACQS requirements.

Implications for the health care sector

The platform's interoperability with My Health Record allows Touchstone Life Care to provide a scalable, national solution for ACP management and accessibility. This integration not only supports continuity of care across aged care, primary care, and acute settings but also enables real-time information sharing, reducing the risk of miscommunication and unnecessary hospitalisations.

As Australia continues to build an efficient, equitable and connected health and aged care system, accurate and accessible ACPs can improve patient outcomes, activate palliative care or hospital-in-the-home services, and help reduce the burden on emergency services and acute hospital services.

Investing in well-planned communication strategies will be critical for sustaining the long-term success of interoperable ACP initiatives. It should include multiple channels and stakeholders including staff, families, facility management and frontline staff, referring doctors and providers, paramedics, and local hospitals.

Conclusion

Touchstone Life Care's pilot with Whiddon highlights the potential of an interoperable platform for managing ACPs in all jurisdictions to improve ACP management, sharing and accessibility, streamline provider operations, and transform communication of patient wishes across the healthcare sector.

Most importantly, the pilot demonstrates the benefit for older people themselves, whose wishes are more likely to be followed when a current, easily accessible ACP is at hand in crucial moments.

To learn more, please visit www.touchstonelifecare.com

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Read the Impact Report of the pilot here